

A SHORT VIEW OF ISLAM AND THE ARAB WORLD

Essays on Islam, the Arab World,
and Issues Relating to the Global
War on Terrorism

by

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P r e f a c e

September 11th, 2001 is a day, like Franklin D. Roosevelt said in an earlier era, “that will live in infamy.” The tragedy of that day haunts many, and will linger in the American memory for a long time to come. Why did 9/11 happen? Who are these Muslims who seem to hate us so? What drove the terrorists to do what they did? These questions ring out like a peal of thunder in the American conscience. This collection of essays is my modest attempt to answer some of those questions.

I have a Master’s Degree in International Relations, and have lived and worked in the Middle East on two occasions. With an abiding thirst for knowledge I exercised my appetite to learn everything I could about the Middle East and Islam. I traveled and worked in Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain, and developed a fascination with the area that persists to this day. Though perhaps not “an expert” in the academic sense, I approach this field from the perspective of a deep, first-hand experience.

Inspiration for this book came from a series of essays I wrote from November 2001 to March 2002 in order to educate co-workers and colleagues on the issues underlying the terrorism of 9/11. Each essay stands alone and topics run from the evolution of Islamic extremism to issues relating to the current Israeli-Palestinian crisis. It is crucial for us to find answers to the questions of radical Islamic terrorism and Muslim rage – and I believe that the best way to find the answers is to begin to understand Islam and the Muslim faithful. It is within Islam, albeit an extremist brand of Islam, that we find the species of terrorists who conducted the evil acts of 11 September. No matter what your interpretation of Islam, there is no escaping the essential fact that it was Islamic

extremists who perpetrated the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Why do we need to know the motivations of extremist Islamic terrorists? The answer lies in the numbers. The deaths of 241 Marines in Lebanon in 1983, the 19 dead at Khobar Towers in 1996, the over 220 deaths in the U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998, and the 17 American sailors killed on 12 October 2000 in the bombing of the USS Cole warn us that we ignore Islamic extremism at our peril. All these murders were conducted by radical Islamic terrorists – that is why we must learn as much as we can about the ideologies that drive these zealots to suicide and slaughter.

Muslim extremists do not conduct every terrorist act, nor for that matter are the mass of Muslims radical extremists. But by any standard, we can acknowledge that there is an undeniable component of Islam that is painfully at odds with America. Samuel P. Huntington goes so far as to say that: “In the early 1990s Muslims were engaged in more intergroup violence than were non-Muslims, and two-thirds to three-quarters of intercivilizational wars were between Muslims and non-Muslims.”¹

Professor Huntington intimates a clash of civilizations. One encounters difficulty in refuting that certain elements of Islam are antithetically opposed to our way of life and our civilization. There are factions of Islam willing to martyr their youth, who enthusiastically die as warriors in a holy war, a *jihad*, conducted against America and the West.

¹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (Touchstone, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1997), pp. 256-257.

It doesn't have to be this way. The majority of Muslims are just people who want to go about their lives and live a normal, and as far as possible, happy life. Not all Muslims, nor even the bulk of Muslims, are evil. We must not measure or associate every Muslim to Usama bin Laden, just as Muslims should not compare every American to a Timothy McVeigh. The differences between Islamic society and the West sometimes seem vast. But just as we have differences with Muslims, we also have things in common. It is in our best interests to gain an appreciation of those things that are common in order to close the gap between Islam and America. In narrowing the gulf that divides us we can begin to see the commonality of humanity. We can begin to see a common bond of kinship in the greater order of man and the human race.

I am not an apologist, I believe in speaking frankly and plainly, there are elements of Islamic society that need re-examination, the status of women for one. Women are definitely not equal in Islam and the Arab world. In some parts of the Arab and Muslim world the practice of "honor killings," the act of killing a female family member accused of extra or pre-marital sex to cleanse a family's honor, is still practiced and condoned.

Just as I am not an apologist, I am most certainly not a "cultural relativist." Cultural relativism says that good and bad are relative to culture. Cultural relativism is the "I'm okay, you're okay," method of saying that no universal truths exist in the world. Cultural relativists see morality as a product of culture. What is "good" or "bad" in one culture is relative only to that culture. The relativists believe that what is right for one culture does not necessarily make it right or wrong for another; just different. With this in view, the cultural relativist would defend "honor killings" as just part of a different culture; an act "socially accepted" in that culture, and not to be measured or condemned by any other culture. I do not accept this.

I believe a set of core values exists that is common to all mankind. There are universal truths that are absolute and immutable. I believe in an established set of principles (Aristotle called them “first principles”) that are universally valid. Those principles include the prohibition of killing the innocent or killing without justification; the requirement of nurturing and caring for children; and the proscription from stealing and lying. These are more than basic principles, they are basic truths that exist under all conditions. And they exist as a matter of necessity. Without them anarchy would rule the day and man would cease to be man as we know him. Man would inevitably become an animal in the basest sense.

I would caution to be aware of the cultural relativist. They exist and some reside within our highest institutions of learning. As Abraham Lincoln said: “You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you can not fool all of the people all of the time.” There are those who would try, but good old American “common sense” will generally prevail, and we will see that the “Emperor has no clothes.”

In more than 30 years of military service to this country I have learned that it is not our technology or advanced weapon systems that make us the best military in the world, it is our people. And it is not America’s technological edge or markets that make America great, it is our people. If we apply this one step higher, we can see that the World’s people are its greatest asset. There are one billion people who make up the Muslim world – and they are assets too. If we start to view them as such, we will gain a better appreciation for their humanity.

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Chapter 1

WHO ARE THEY?

Who are they? Who are these Muslims who seem to hate us so? What thinking, ideology, or theological precept, caused the evil deeds of 11 September 2001? Are we headed for some cataclysmic clash of civilizations – a war between Islam and the West? These and other questions – questions that haunt many who have been gripped by the pangs of grief – cry out for answers.

When you peel back the layers of mistrust, hatred, suspicions, worries, and fears, you will find that the majority of Muslims are just people who want to go about their lives and live a normal, and as far as possible, happy life. Muslims are not the boogey-man. There are boogey-men within the Muslim community, but the vast majority of Muslims are not evil incarnate

In William Shakespeare's, *The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock the Jewish moneylender remarks:

“Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die?”

Well then, hath not a Muslim eyes? Hath not a Muslim hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? If you prick them, do they not bleed? If you tickle them, do they not laugh? Just the same as you or I want to go about our lives, raise our children, live a happy and, hopefully, prosperous life, so does the Muslim. Yes, there are differences, and at times the differences seem so

broad as to be insurmountable. At times the differences seem like a foggy, uncertain gulf, separating Western civilization from the Muslim world. But strip off enough veneer and you will find some commonality basic to all of humankind. It is finding and nurturing that commonality that is our greatest task.

As a U.N. Military Observer (UNMO) in the Middle East, I had the opportunity to live and work with Muslims, and I can assure you that they are as human as you or I. I have shared the generosity of the Bedouin, marveled at the enduring smiles of even the poorest Egyptian, shared endless tea and talk with Jordanians, Palestinians, and Syrians, and never once did I see the slightest trace of a horn, or a cloven hoof, or a spiked tail.

Michael Howard in a recent article in *Foreign Affairs*, notes: "...for Most Americans it must be said that Islam remains one vast terra incognita – and one, like those blank areas on medieval maps, inhabited largely by dragons."¹ The great explorers, in a time of tremendous discovery, filled in the blanks on those medieval maps, and soon found there were no dragons.

It is now time for American society to explore the realm of Islam, to fill in the shaded areas of ignorance, and to know what current moves the everyday tenor of a Muslim's life. The British statesmen and philosopher, Francis Bacon said, "knowledge itself is power." American society must start, then, to fill-in those dark areas on those maps of ignorance, because filling in those dim areas begins to arm us with the power of knowledge. About one hundred years after Bacon's remark, Samuel Johnson, a countryman of Bacon's stated: "As I know more of

¹ Michael Howard, "What's in a Name? How to Fight Terrorism," *Foreign Affairs*, (January/February 2002), p. 13.

mankind I expect less of them, and am ready now to call a man *a good man*, upon easier terms than I was formerly.”²

When we know more of a Muslim, then perhaps we may be able to call him a good man, at least based upon easier terms than we could before. It will not be enough, however, for us to know Islam, without a sincere reciprocity on the part of Islam as well. I believe that is where American Muslims can make an enormous contribution. Muslims in the United States can help educate Muslims throughout the World and send them the clear message that Islam, can, and indeed does, thrive within America’s democratic framework. The freedoms guaranteed in American society are the richest soil upon Earth from which to grow and nurture a family – from which to sprout the seeds of a happy, prosperous life. This is the message that American Muslims need to send – that in a democracy like America’s, the soil of freedom can be deeply rich and fertile. And when this message gets out, Muslims too will see that Americans don’t have horns, or cloven hooves, or spiked tails.

The radical extremists and zealots who follow Usama bin Ladin to my mind are indeed evil, but America has had its own share of radical extremists, religious fanatics and zealots – the Reverend Jim Jones, David Koresh, and Timothy McVeigh to name a few. I would hope that Muslims do not believe that Americans come from the same mold as Jim Jones, David Koresh, or Timothy McVeigh. Just as we do not want Islam to view all Americans as a Timothy McVeigh, then we too, must not cast all (or even most) Muslims in the same mold as Usama bin Ladin.

For those who are familiar with Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, they will undoubtedly know Shylock’s speech, which I quoted above, ends thus:

² Quote from: *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, Third Edition*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1980), p.279

“...if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? if we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.”

Michael Howard in the aforementioned *Foreign Affairs* article states: “For Muslims in Ankara or Cairo, Paris or Berlin, the events of September 11 were terrible, but they happened a long way away in another world. By contrast, those whose sufferings as a result of Western air raids or of Israeli incursions are nightly depicted on television are people, however geographically distant, with whom Muslims around the world can easily identify.”³ The majority of Muslims regard the deaths of 11 September as unquestionably wrong, but in some small measure they look upon it as caused by America’s own devices, America’s hypocritical (as they see it) foreign policy. In a “twist of thought” they see 9/11 as revenge – and they feel that revenge not unlike Skylock’s feeling for revenge in *The Merchant of Venice*.

Hopefully, as we learn about them and they, in-turn, learn about us – the knowledge gained will make both cultures appreciate that in the scope of time and in the grand measure of humankind, we all possess a common bond. When we gain that power in knowledge, we can know that common bond, we can call a Muslim, and they can call us – “ a good man.” If not, I am afraid that there are those in both cultures, both civilizations, who will want to extract their “pound of flesh.”

³ Michael Howard, *Foreign Affairs*, Op. Cit., p. 13.

Chapter 2

A SHORT VIEW OF ISLAM AND THE ARAB WORLD

The intent of this essay is to present a short view of Islam and the Arab world – to provide some understanding of why western civilization, especially the United States, oftentimes finds itself at odds with the Arab world and Islam.

Currently, the United States finds itself in a war to root out and eradicate terrorism, the kind of appalling terrorism that was behind the events of 11 September 2001. Overwhelming consensus (and supporting evidence) has the Saudi Arabian born militant, Usama bin Ladin, as the mastermind behind the “9/11” atrocities. Usama bin Ladin and his terrorist organization, Al Qa’ida are the sponsors of numerous terrorist acts whose purported purpose is to unite all Muslims and establish pure Islamic governments in the style of the Taliban. Bin Ladin has proclaimed a holy war or *jihad* against the United States and he has gone so far as to call the Khobar Towers bombings, “praiseworthy terrorism,” and to remark, “if someone can kill an American soldier, it is better than wasting time on other matters.”¹

Why do Bin Ladin and Al Qa’ida want to destroy America? Why do they hate us so? To try and understand this deep-seated loathing, one must examine what one author has termed “the clash of civilizations.”² This conflict is the clash of West versus Islam. The ancient Chinese General Sun Tzu once said, “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the results of a hundred

¹ U.S. Government Factsheet on Usama Bin Ladin, 20 August 1998,
<http://usembassy.state.gov/afghanistan/wwwhtr01.html>

² Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (Touchstone, Simon and Schuster, New York, NY, 1996).

battles.”³ To understand the clash of West versus Islam we must first try and understand Islam – we must know Islam.

Nearly one billion people comprise the civilization of Islam, making Muslims second only to the Chinese in numbers of people. Western civilization ranks fourth behind the Hindu population.⁴ Muslims then, make up a significant “target audience.”

Islam is one of the world’s great monotheistic religions and has relational links with both Judaism and Christianity. The root fundamental precept in Islam is the belief in one God, a God who was neither begotten nor begets. *Islam* is Arabic for submission, and the Arabic word *Muslim* translates as submitter, therefore Muslims submit to the oneness of God and to the word of God as contained in the Qur’an.

The Prophet Muhammad and the Birth of Islam

Any understanding of Islam cannot be complete without some knowledge of the founder of Islam – Muhammad. Muhammad was born circa A.D. 570 in the town of Mecca in what is now the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Muhammad’s father died months before he was born and his mother died when he was six. Muhammad was raised, first by his Grandfather, and then when his Grandfather died, by his Uncle Abu Talib. Muhammad descended from the house or clan of Hashim⁵ a branch of the tribe of Quraysh.

³ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, edited by James Clavell, (Delta Book, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, New York, NY, 1983), p. 18.

⁴ Huntington, *Op. Cit.*, p.84.

⁵ This is the same tribe, *Hashimite*, to which the former King Hussein and his son, the current King Abdullah of Jordan are descended.

When Muhammad was 25 years old, he married the prosperous merchant widow, Khadijah, who was some 15 years his senior. Khadijah bore Muhammad two sons and four daughters. His sons both died in infancy. Two of Muhammad's daughters married the second and fourth Caliphs of Islam, and his daughter Fatima married Mohammad's cousin Ali, the son of Abu Talib. It is the followers of Ali who formed the Shi'ite sect thus creating the schism in Islam.⁶

On the 27th Night of Ramadan, A.D. 610, Muhammad, on one of his regular spiritual retreats, in a cave on Mt. Hira, above Mecca, received a revelation. The archangel Gabriel (in Arabic *Jibril*) appeared next to him and commanded him to "Recite!"⁷ This recitation (the word *Qur'an* in Arabic means recitation) captured, according to Islam, the word of God as directly given to Muhammad. During the next few years, Muhammad received more revelations from the angel Gabriel and began his advocacy of *Islam* (submission) to the one God, Allah.

Muhammad's ministry conflicted with the Quraysh oligarchy in Mecca. The Quraysh were an aristocratic group of rich merchants who held power and essentially controlled the economy of Mecca. They had concluded pacts with other Arab tribes to secure the safety of pilgrims visiting the *Ka'bah* (Arabic for cube) – eventually making a substantial area of Mecca surrounding the Ka'bah, off limits to blood feuds and bloodshed. According to Arab legend Abraham and Ishmael (the son of Abraham by his concubine, Hagar) re-built the Ka'bah on the site where Adam had first built a structure, dedicating it to God (legend says that Adam's structure was subsequently destroyed by the great flood). Thus, the Ka'bah had been a site of Arab pilgrimage since before memory.

⁶ Caesar E. Farah, Ph.D., *Islam*, (Barron's Educational Series, Inc, Hauppauge, NY, 2000), p. 37.

⁷ Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad, A Biography of the Prophet*, (HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., New York, NY, 1992), p. 83

Because of the protection provided by the Quraysh in and around the Ka'bah, many Arab tribes began to abandon their local shrines and place idols of their favorite deity within the Ka'bah. The Ka'bah became a place of idol worship and soon contained hundreds of Arab idols. Muhammad's teachings were not only hostile to idol worship, but were egalitarian, calling for standards of fairness and justice for everyone. Quraysh power was founded on a system of privilege, and the economy of Mecca was strongly tied to the idol worship at the Ka'bah. Therefore, Muhammad soon became a significant liability to the Quraysh.⁸

Before long, Muhammad began to gather a large group of followers, many from the lower classes. The Quraysh put the order out to quash the upstart Muhammad's preaching and disband his followers. Muhammad, however, was protected by his clan the Hashim, so the initial pressures and fears of being singled out were placed on Muhammad's converts. Persecution of Muhammad and his followers intensified and in A.D. 615, Muhammad advised his followers to seek refuge in the Christian Kingdom of Abyssinia (modern day Ethiopia).

In 619, both Muhammad's wife Khadijah and his Uncle Abu Talib died. The death of Abu Talib put additional pressures on Muhammad as his Uncle had exercised considerable influence with the Quraysh oligarchy and had provided protection for Muhammad.

A.D. 620 is the year of Muhammad's mystical, "night journey," where he is reputed to have flown on the winged horse *Buruq* to Jerusalem and thence upward with the angel Gabriel to heaven. As the story goes, Muhammad had fallen asleep near the Ka'bah, was woken by Gabriel, and was lifted on *Buruq* and flown to *al-masjid al-aqsa*, or the "Further Mosque" on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. From a rock (Jewish tradition has it that Abraham offered Isaac up

⁸ Farah, *Op. Cit.*, p. 43.

for sacrifice on this very rock) on the Temple Mount, Muhammad ascended to the seven heavens, and in each heaven met a prophet of old – Adam, Jesus, Joseph, Enoch, Aaron, Moses and finally in the seventh heaven, Abraham.⁹ Today the Mosque called the “Dome of the Rock,” is built over the rock where Muhammad ascended to heaven. It is situated on the *Al-Haram al-Sharif*, or Noble Sanctuary, an area of approximately 35 acres also containing the *Al Aqsa* Mosque. The Noble Sanctuary is the Jewish, “Temple Mount.” The Dome of the Rock is located where the Jewish sacred holy of holies was placed in the ancient Hebrew Temple of Solomon. Since its construction, the site of the Dome of the Rock has been a great source of contention between Islam and Judaism, as both claim the spot as a “holy site.”

A.D. 622 is a landmark year in Islam. It is the year of the *Hijrah* (migration or flight) of Muhammad and his followers to Medina (then called Yathrib).¹⁰ The year 622 marks year one of the Muslim calendar – to the faithful, it is the start of the Islamic era and the end of the “Age of Ignorance” (*Jahiliyah*).¹¹

The persecution intensified to the level that Muhammad feared for his life and the lives of his followers. Upon the invitation of several tribes responsive to his message, Muhammad left Mecca and immigrated to Medina. The people of Medina were more receptive to his counsel and Muhammad’s following grew.

In 624, the Quraysh, fearing the continued spread of Muhammad’s ministry, sent an army from Mecca to Medina. The Muslims met the Meccans at the wells of Badr, and though outnumbered three to one, defeated the Meccans in what became known as the Battle of Badr. Muhammad’s fortunes changed

⁹ Armstrong, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 138-139.

¹⁰ After Muhammad’s death the town became known as *Madinat al-Rasul*, the city of the messenger, or more popularly *Madinah*, Medina.

¹¹ Farah, *Op. Cit.*, p. 47.

dramatically after this – besides being a great preacher and administrator, he was now seen as a great military commander. The following year (625), however, the Muslims were defeated at the battle of Uhud, but the Meccans failed to follow up on their victory and Islam was preserved.

Because of perceived duplicity in cooperating with the Quraysh, the Muslims were determined to drive out the Jewish tribe of *al-Nadir*. In A.D. 626, Muhammad and his followers battled the *al-Nadir*, crushed them and expelled them from Medina.

In 627, in what became known as the “War of the Ditch,” the Meccans again tried to attack Medina. Muhammad and his warriors dug a trench around the city, and the Meccans’ attack was foiled. Once more, in 627, angered by the perceived betrayal of the Jewish tribe *Banu Qurayzah*, the Muslims did battle and defeated the Jews.

The year 628 saw a treaty executed between the Quraysh and the Muslims, allowing the Muslims to conduct pilgrimage to Mecca without fear of reprisals or bloodshed. The same treaty allowed Muhammad to proselytize without interference.

In A.D. 630, the Quraysh broke their treaty and attacked a tribe allied to the Muslims. Muhammad became determined to march on Mecca and put an end to the Quraysh oligarchy. He formed an army and on 1 January 630 advanced on Mecca. Before reaching Mecca he was met by a delegation of the Quraysh who promised to submit to the new faith. The entire city converted and the Ka’bah was established as the religious center of Islam.

632 witnessed Muhammad’s last pilgrimage to Mecca, and on 8 June of that year, Muhammad died and was buried in Medina. In his farewell sermon on his

last pilgrimage to Mecca, Muhammad sealed the bonds between all Muslims when he said: "Know ye that all Muslims are brothers. Ye are all one brotherhood; and no man shall take ought from his brother unless it is freely given to him."¹²

Foundations of Islam

(Roots and Links to Judaism and Christianity)

The Qur'an is the heart of Islam. To Muslims, it is the literal word of God, handed down directly to the Prophet Muhammad. As previously mentioned the Arabic word *Qur'an*, means recitation or readings. As one author states: "This series of readings for which Muhammad was called upon by Gabriel to deliver to the Arabs, who hitherto had lacked a body of sacred text, was to be in Arabic, 'the language of the angels,' as verified by the Qur'an."¹³ *Surah* (Arabic for Chapter) 43 states: "We have revealed the Koran in the Arabic tongue that you may understand its meaning."¹⁴ Muslims insist that the Qur'an can only be understood, without error, in the original Arabic, the language in which Allah passed it to Muhammad. "...Muslims believe in Inlibration the embodiment of God in a Book. That book is the Koran. The reverence and mystery that Christians feel toward Jesus the Christ is what Muslims feel toward their Book."¹⁵ Both Christians and Jews will see familiar stories throughout the Qur'an. Christians and Jews will recognize references to Adam, the story of Cain and Able, reference to Noah and the flood, Joseph and his brothers, Jacob and the

¹² Quoted in: Farah, *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹⁴ *The Koran*, translated with notes by N.J. Dawood, (Penguin Books, London, England, 5th Edition with revisions, 1993), p. 343.

¹⁵ Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Creators*, (Random House, New York, 1992) p. 63.

tribes, David and Solomon, as well as many references to the story of Moses' struggles with Pharaoh. As one noted Middle East scholar points out:

“In the Muslim perception, Judaism and Christianity were predecessors of Islam, earlier stages in the sequence of prophetic revelations sent by God to mankind, and thus in a sense of Islam itself. The Muslim list of prophets includes Adam, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Lot, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, Jesus, John the Baptist, and other Biblical figures. The scriptures given to the Jews and Christians are identified in the Qur'an as the Tawrat, that is the Pentateuch, brought by the prophet Moses; the Psalms brought by the prophet David; and the Gospels brought by the prophet Jesus. All these were superseded and rendered unnecessary by the final and perfect revelation brought by the Prophet Muhammad and contained in the Qur'an.”¹⁶

Christians and Jews are both mentioned in the Qur'an as “People of the Book,” because their respective ancient scriptures, passed down through the ages, provided the roots of monotheistic theology that culminated in the final word of God as revealed to Muhammad. As mentioned earlier, Arabic is the lone language of the Qur'an and the faithful regard all translations as false, “...particularly because it is a copy of the archetype preserved in heaven.”¹⁷ That is why many of the Muslim faith who are not Arabic, quote, by rote memory, verses from the Qur'an in Arabic, sometimes without comprehension or understanding of what the verses mean.

The Qur'an was preserved first by “memorizers,” – Muslims who committed the surahs to memory. Sometimes the faithful would write down a surah on parchment, palm leaves, or smooth stones.¹⁸ Abu Bakr, Muhammad's father-in-law and successor (also the first Caliph), was compelled to reconquer Arabia.

¹⁶ Bernard Lewis, *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East*, (Schocken Books, New York, NY, 1998), pp. 118-119.

¹⁷ Farah, *Op. Cit.*, p. 100.

¹⁸ Muhammad was illiterate and could not read or write.

During one of the battles, many of Muhammad's companions and memorizers, were killed. Umar¹⁹, another companion of Muhammad urged Abu Bakr to have the Qur'an codified. Abu Bakr tasked Zayd, a one-time aide to Muhammad to commit the Qur'an to writing. Zayd assembled all the various sources to include the memories of Muhammad's companions and compiled the first complete written text of the Qur'an. In 657 Zayd was again tasked to collect the various codifications being used and to compile the "authoritative" version. It is essentially this version of the Qur'an that survives to this day.²⁰

Fundamentals of Islam

The Five Pillars of Islam

As noted earlier, Islam is founded on the principle that there is only one God, *Allah*, and the belief in *Allah's* word as given to Muhammad in the Qur'an. To a Muslim there are two fundamental conceptions, *iman* (the expression of faith), and *ihsan* (right-doing).²¹ In Islam deeds are of greater importance than doctrine, and the "five pillars" are practices that demonstrate faithfulness and fulfillment of Allah's will. The five pillars represent a framework for Muslims to follow in leading a true Islamic life. The five pillars are:

Shahada. The one prerequisite for becoming a Muslim is to profess the *shahada* (open testimony), that there is no God but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God. This declaration of faith asserts the belief in the one God and that the purpose of life is to obey God's laws as given to Muhammad in the Qur'an.

¹⁹ Umar succeeded Abu Bakr and became the second *Caliph* or leader of Islam.

²⁰ Farah, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 96-97.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 102.

Salah (prayer). Muslims are required to pray five times a day. The Muslim ritual of prayer involves the confession of faith, the *shahada*, and reciting verses from the Qur'an. All Muslim worshipers, when praying, face the direction of Mecca and the *Ka'bah*.

Zakah (almsgiving). In Islam everything belongs to *Allah* and the living only hold wealth in trust. It is a religious requirement to give to the needy and an annual giving of 2.5 percent of one's wealth is the requirement.

Sawm (fasting). Fasting is to be done during the Muslim month of Ramadan, the month that the Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad.

Hajj (pilgrimage). The pilgrimage to the sacred monuments (*Ka'bah*) at Mecca is a once-in-a-lifetime obligation for every Muslim who is physically able and can afford to do so.

Other Islamic Teachings/Precepts

Muslims believe in obedience to God and the Qur'an, respect for parents and elders, kindness, consideration for others (orphans, the poor), honesty and courage. These and other attributes are to be strived for by the faithful Muslim. The Muslim believes in a concept of Heaven and Hell, and there is a Satan (*Shaytan*). Elements of worship in Islam involve belief in angels, *Jinn* (spirits – of two types, evil and helpful), the messengers or prophets, pre-destiny, and the Day of Judgment. In one respect, *Jinn* are seen as guardian angels, watching over man and keeping a record for the Day of Judgment.

Muslims believe in pre-destiny – *Allah* has pre-ordained and pre-determined all that takes place or will take place. To many Muslims everything that takes place, everything that happens, is the will of *Allah*, and to try and change what *Allah* has willed only makes things worse – hence the oft-repeated saying

“*Inshallah* (God willing).” In *Surah* 18 of the Qur’an we find the remonstrance: “Do not say of anything: ‘I will do it tomorrow,’ without adding: ‘If God will.’”²² This reminds the Muslim that there will only be a tomorrow if God wills it.

According to one Islamic scholar, Muslims also believe in the concept of “free will.” He states: “The one important principle held by all, however, is that Allah in His divine justice allows man the freedom of those actions upon which he will be judged.”²³

Muslims value the family as the foundation of Islamic society. The family, the clan, and the tribe are basic to Muslim loyalties and the Qur’an reinforces this strong allegiance. The Muslim view of loyalty can be viewed through concentric circles. The smaller circle is the family, the next encompassing circle the clan, leading to the larger circle of the tribe. It wasn’t until the early 20th Century that Muslims began to form any concept of a nation-state.

Umma

Closely related to the concept of family is the concept of *Umma*, (community). In the broadest sense of the term, Umma is the community of Muslims. The Umma of Islam goes back to Muhammad’s farewell speech, in which he proclaimed that all Muslims are brothers. Viewing the concentric circles of family, clan and tribe, it is the Umma and Islam that link them all together. Islam and the Umma are the threads that bind all the circles together.

²² *The Koran*, Op. Cit., p. 207.

²³ Farah, Op. Cit., p. 117.

Jihad

Jihad in its literal Arabic translation means “struggle.” It is a striving or struggle to do the will of God. There are two connotations of Jihad, the Greater Jihad or personal struggle to do what is right, and the Lesser Jihad, or the struggle to defend Islam – and the defense of Islam includes military defense or “holy war.” Allied to the concept of Jihad are the terms, *Dar al-Islam* (House of Islam), and *Dar al-harb* (House of War). Bernard Lewis, Professor Emeritus of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University, states:

“The world is divided into the House of Islam and the House of War, the *Dar al-Islam* and the *Dar al-harb*. The *Dar al-Islam* is all those lands in which a Muslim government rules and the Holy Law of Islam prevails. Non-Muslims may live there on Muslim sufferance. The outside world, which has not yet been subjugated, is called the “House of War,” and strictly speaking a perpetual state of *jihad*, of holy war, is imposed by the law.”²⁴

The more radical sense of jihad, the holy war, is the one frequently adopted by Islamic militants, but most Muslims tend to think in terms of a struggle to defend Islam and the Umma by keeping alive the principles of Islam.

Shari'ah

The *Shari'ah* is the fundamental law of Islam as derived from the Qur'an, the *Sunna* and *Hadith*. *Sunna* and *Hadith* are nearly synonymous terms dealing with Muhammad and his example. The *sunna* are Muhammad's habitual behavior, how the prophet was supposed to have acted, the *hadith* are the recorded traditions of Muhammad. Thousands of *hadith* have been recorded and subjected to a rigorous process of verification by tracing the source of the tradition “...back through a chain of witnesses to the Prophet or a

²⁴ Lewis, *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East*, Op. Cit., pp. 121-122.

Companion.”²⁵ As one author makes clear: “The *Shari’ah* is Islam’s constitution. The function of evolving effectual legal principles from the *Shari’ah* gave rise to the *Fiqh* (jurisprudence), *without differentiation between the spiritual and the secular* (emphasis supplied). The process of evolving the *Fiqh* started when Muhammad first began to adjudicate for the nascent Muslim community in Medina.”²⁶ It cannot be stressed enough that there is no difference in Islam between the spiritual and secular – there is no separation between church and state.

The Islamic Schism

(Sunni and Shi’ite)

Today Islam is divided into two primary sects, the *Sunni* sect and the *Shi’ite* sect. The overwhelming majority, or over 85 percent of Muslims are Sunni – the largest minority sect in Islam is the Shi’ite sect (nearly all of Iran and about 50 percent of Iraq are Shi’ite Muslims). The term Shi’ite derives from the first civil war in Islam when a disagreement arose as to who the legitimate Caliph of Islam should be – a relative of Muhammad, or a Caliph chosen by the Umma. Followers of Ali (cousin of Muhammad who married Fatima the daughter of Muhammad) called themselves *Shi’at ‘Ali* (the party of Ali), and argued that only the direct descendants of Muhammad should be Caliph. Shi’ites concluded that the legitimate heir to the Caliphate or leadership of Islam should be descendants of Muhammad or *Imams*. Sunni Muslims tend to be traditional or orthodox in their views of Islam. They place great emphasis on the *sunna* or practices of Muhammad, as a guide for right living. When the *Qur’an* is silent on a matter of what should be done in a particular situation, then Muslims will look to the *sunna* of Muhammad – what would Muhammad have said or done. They tend to not

²⁵ Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, (Warner Books, New York, NY, 1991) p. 70.

²⁶ Farah, *Op. Cit.*, p. 156.

be activist like the Shi'ite sect. To the Shi'ite, religious clerics, their *imams*, are central to the Shi'ite beliefs – in Sunni Islam, clerics are only peripheral to Islam. “Thus in lieu of caliph, who was imbued with no spiritual authority by the Sunnis other than to set an example for piety, the Shi'ahs recognized an *Imam* who, until his disappearance, was regarded as an infallible teacher and the only source of religious instruction and guidance.”²⁷

Insights into the Arab Mind

(Some reasons on why they hate us)

In what has become a frequently quoted article, Bernard Lewis, writing in the September 1990 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, described Muslim animosity towards the West thus:

“The Muslim has suffered successive stages of defeat. The first was his loss of domination in the world, to the advancing power of Russia and the West. The second was the undermining of his authority in his own country, through an invasion of foreign ideas and laws and ways of life and sometimes even foreign rulers or settlers, and the enfranchisement of native non-Muslim elements. The third – the last straw – was the challenge to his mastery in his own house, from emancipated women and rebellious children. It was too much to endure, and the outbreak of rage against these alien, infidel, and incomprehensible forces that had subverted his dominance, disrupted his society, and finally violated the sanctuary of his home was inevitable.”²⁸

History's Insights

The roots of Muslim rage are deep and they are old. Some of those resentments have their beginnings in Islam's history, especially as that history

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

²⁸ Bernard Lewis, “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1990.

relates to the clash of Islam and the West. Muslims take great pride in their history and Islam's accomplishments.

While Europe was cloaked in the ignorance of the "dark ages," early Islamic civilization had reached a zenith, making great advances in medicine, architecture, engineering and mathematics, as well as expanding its empire. By A.D. 750, a little over 100 years after the death of Muhammad, Islam had conquered over half the known world. The Islamic empire burst out of the Arabian Peninsula, swept over the desert sands of Egypt and North Africa, reached deep into the medieval kingdoms of Spain, and conquered the lands and magnificent cities that were once the great Persian Empire. The Ottoman Empire spread Islam even further with an Ottoman army at one time reaching the gates of Vienna.

Apart from the Muslim advance into Spain, the next major clash of Islam and the West took place during a period of history referred to as the Crusades (1095 – 1291). During this time Christian armies from Europe marched into the Middle East in an attempt to rid Jerusalem and the Holy Land of the Muslim infidel. Pope Urban II, at the Council of Clermont in 1095, exhorted Christendom to a "holy war" against the Muslims, promising the remission of sins to all who took part.

In 1099 a Crusader army sacked Jerusalem, and according to contemporary accounts, every man, woman, and child, both of Islamic and Jewish faith, were slaughtered. The eyewitness account of Raymund of Aguiles tells of the massacre:

"Wonderful sights were to be seen. Some of our men (and this was more merciful) cut off the heads of their enemies; others shot them with arrows, so that they fell from the towers; others tortured them longer by casting them into the flames. Piles of heads, hands and feet were to be seen in the streets of the city. It was necessary to pick one's way over the bodies of men and horses. But these were small matters compared to what happened at the

Temple of Solomon, a place where religious services are normally chanted. What happened there? If I tell the truth it will exceed your powers of belief. So let it suffice to say this much, at least, that in the Temple and porch of Solomon, men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins. Indeed it was a just and splendid judgment of God that this place should be filled with the blood of unbelievers since it had suffered so long from their blasphemies.”²⁹

When some in the West think of Crusades, they think of chivalrous knights conducting a holy war with the blessing of God. When Muslims think of the Crusades they think of the terrible slaughter that took place in the name of a false God. As one author points out, “The idea of the Crusades quietly permeates many aspects of modern life in the Arab and wider Islamic world. For some, the concept of the Crusades is seen as a manifestation of the continuing struggle between Islam and Christianity...Others see the Crusades as the first stage of European colonialism...”³⁰

Muslims view the West as the source of many tragedies. In 1798, Napoleon conquered Egypt and occupied Cairo. The French subjugated Algeria in 1830. In 1839, the British took Aden as a coaling station for British ships. In the 1870s British and French interests assumed control of the Suez Canal allowing the Khedive of Egypt to borrow exorbitant amounts of money with canal shares as collateral, thus plunging Egypt deeply into debt. In 1882, feeling the surge of nationalism and suffering the burden of foreign creditors and British taxation, an Egyptian army officer, Ahmad Urabi, led a revolt against the British and was crushed by a British expeditionary force. Thereafter, Britain pulled the strings on the Egyptian puppet government.

²⁹ Quoted in: Karen Armstrong, *Holy War: The Crusades and Their Impact on Today's World*, (Anchor Books, New York, 2001), pp. 178-179.

³⁰ Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades. Islamic Perspectives*, (Routledge, New York, NY, 2000), p.590.

After the First World War, Britain and France carved up the carcass of the Ottoman Empire into French and British colonies. The British Mandate in Palestine lasted until 1948, ending with the formation of the new state of Israel. In 1956, after Egyptian President Nasser had nationalized the Suez Canal, the French and British colluded with Israel in a secret agreement to attack Egypt and overturn the rule of Nasser (the Israelis, French, and British were forced to withdraw because of strong pressures applied by the US and the Soviet Union). One can begin to see why the Muslim psyche has a deep-seated resentment over the past wounds of Western colonialism.

The Impact of Harsh Economic Conditions

Much of the Arab world is poor, and the sting of poverty burns in humiliation and bitterness. As one Muslim scholar observes: “The Islamic world – including the some 40 nations in which Muslims constitute the majority of the population – is a rich assortment of peoples and cultures. It is united, in fact, only by the prevalence of poverty. Beyond the borders of the desert oil kingdoms, Muslim societies are poor, and developing, confined by their lack of political, economic, and military resources.”³¹

Besides being poor, Middle East Muslim populations are young. One source has the average age of the population as sixteen.³² Samuel P. Huntington provides additional stark figures, declaring that the proportion of youth (fifteen to twenty-four) now exceeds over 20 percent of the total population in the Middle East.³³ To be young and poor is a volatile combination – ready tinder for the

³¹ Mahnaz Ispahani, “Varieties of Muslim Experience,” *The Wilson Quarterly*, Autumn 1989, p. 63.

³² R. Stephen Humphreys, *Between Memory and Desire. The Middle East in a Troubled Age*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1999), p. 4.

³³ Samuel P. Huntington, *Op. Cit.*, p. 118.

match of Islamic radicalism. As Huntington says, "...young people are the protagonists of protest, instability, reform, and revolution."³⁴

With poverty impacting so much of the youth of Islam there is bound to be a growing anger with what they see in the rich and decadent West. The labor markets are overflowing with youth and it is not unusual to see university graduates and those with post-graduate degrees, driving taxicabs. The coffeehouses of the Middle East are packed with unemployed young men, who sit amidst clouds of cigarette smoke and engage in debate about the ills of the Middle East. Note that I did not say the ills of Islam, because to them Islam is infallible – it is the ills of their particular country that they discuss, and inevitably the conversation turns to the perceived cause of those ills – the West and western, immoral society. As a professor of Middle East studies sums up: "...young people everywhere are impatient with authority and in search of meaning for their lives – hence the magnetism of ideologies that explain and solve everything. When two-thirds of the population is less than twenty-five, the search for meaning and alienation from the stifling established order inevitably become a defining element of the whole society."³⁵

The Bedouin Culture

To the Arab, the values and life of the Bedouin is the ideal. However romantic it may appear, the Arab mind is strongly influenced by the ethos of the Bedouin. Bedouin courage and bravery, Bedouin hospitality and generosity, Bedouin honor and dignity, the Bedouin aversion to work that gets the hands dirty, the Bedouin tendency to want to "save face" at all costs and to avoid shame – all these traits, to the Arab, are the epitome of right living, the embodiment of

³⁴ Ibid., p. 117.

³⁵ Humphreys, Op. Cit., p. 4.

perfection. It is these Bedouin characteristics that often cause conflict with western culture.³⁶

The many defeats that the Arabs have experienced from Israel assail the Arab at the very core of his culture. His traits of bravery and courage are confronted by defeat, and his honor and dignity challenged. The loss to the infidel upstart Jewish state, caused the Arab to “lose face,” and caused a significant drop in the self-respect of the Arab psyche. The Arab sense of honor comes into conflict with the West in other ways as well.

The achievements of the Arabs in the Middle Ages, and the days when the Islamic Empire occupied half the known world are a great source of pride for the Arab. For the Arab to now see the “tables turned,” and the West in the seat of power and influence – is cause for much jealousy, acrimony and a deep insult to Arab honor. In referring to the current Arab sense of “cultural inferiority,” one prominent Arabist states: “His extremely keen sense of honor is yet another factor creating in him a suspicion, of which he cannot rid himself, that by imitating the West he might be debasing himself; and since he cannot stop imitating the West, he hates it for luring him into a dishonorable posture.”³⁷

The Problems of Palestine

The continuing Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a festering, open sore on the Arab consciousness. The current *Intifada*, with its daily television images of the young Palestinian “Davids,” hurling stones at the tanks of the Israeli “Goliath,” sear deep the pangs of loathing into an already bleeding sense of Arab pride and honor.

³⁶ For a discussion of the Bedouin influence on Arab thought, see: Raphael Patai, *The Arab Mind*, (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1983), Chapters V, VI, & VII.

³⁷ Raphael Patai, *The Arab Mind*, (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1983), p. 300.

With no end in sight to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Arab mind sees the United States as umbilically linked to Israel. In a greater sense they see America as the manifestation of the Great Satan, the overpowering, neo-colonial hegemonic demon that supplants Islam with Western “pop-culture,” “Big Macs,” pornography, and a hedonistic, insatiable greed for the fruits of the Middle East – oil.

The Palestinian problem exacerbates all the resentments and animosities that have built up for generations, and will continue to be the dominant issue for Islam in the Twenty First Century. A chilling article recently appeared in *The Palestine Times*, an Internet version of the printed publication. In the article, the author, a Palestinian, describes why he hates America:

“America is the tormentor of my people. It is to me, as a Palestinian, what Nazi Germany was to the Jews. America is the all-powerful devil that spreads oppression and death in my neighbourhood. How can I not hate this “great Satan,” the evil empire? Does anyone expect people to love their tormentor? America has been, and continues to be, the sponsor, enabler, protector, and justifier of my people’s misery for the last 50 years. ...America treats me and my people as “children of a lesser God.” In fact, in the final analysis, America offers me one of two choices: Either I submissively accept personal enslavement and oppression...or become an Osama bin Laden. Honestly, there is not a third choice; if there is one, let us see it. I’m not exaggerating at all, as I know that the distance between being tormented by America’s oppressive hegemony and being converted or mesmerized into bin-Ladenism is shorter and smaller than many would think, including the so-called experts in Washington. ...All we want is to be left alone and allowed to live a normal life and exercise our God-given rights and freedoms...like other human beings. Is this asking too much? Please, America, don’t make me an Osama bin Laden.”³⁸

Obviously, the above article was written to influence and to cause a sensation, but there are numerous articles of a similar nature filling the pages of Arab

³⁸ Khalid Amayreh, “Why I Hate America,” *The Palestine Times*, www.ptimes.com November 2001.

newspapers, weeklies, and magazines. In an article in *Al-Ahram* (the weekly Internet online version), an Egyptian journalist answered in print the question “Why do Arabs Hate America,”

“...Why do the Arabs hate America? It has never occurred to them that we strongly object to US foreign policy in our region. Indeed, recent US foreign policy makes no sense to most people, in the Arab world or elsewhere.”³⁹

Unfortunately, until a real peace takes place between Israel and the Palestinian people, the U.S. will be closely linked to Israel, and we will continue to be viewed through the poor, jealous, resentful eyes of the Arab people.

The list of Muslim grievances, according to one author: “...includes U.S. support for authoritarianism in the Muslim world in the name of stability or material interests such as ensuring the flow of oil, routine U.S. backing of Israeli policies, and Washington’s failure to press for democratic political processes out of fear that they might bring Islamist groups to power.”⁴⁰ This record of grievances triggers the dissatisfied Muslim masses to find champions with messages that are hopeful, even if, the champions are in truth false heroes with false messages.

The Message of Usama bin Ladin

(Why it resonates in the Arab world)

Usama bin Ladin’s message is steeped in a puritanical form of Sunni extremism. His idea is that if Muslims can regain their disciplined faith, they can and will defeat the great empires of the world, as did the early Muslims. He

³⁹ Mustafa Kamel El-Sayed, “To an American Friend,” *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 22-28 November 2001, Issue No. 561, <http://www.ahram.org.eg/weekly/2001/651/op10.htm>

⁴⁰ Graham E. Fuller, “The Future of Political Islam,” *Foreign Affairs*, (March/April 2002, Vol 81, No. 2) p. 53.

preaches an ideology that says Islam is pure and infallible, and that Islam has not been overtaken by a brighter, more advanced enemy (the West), rather Muslims themselves have strayed from the pure path. By returning to pure, disciplined Islam, Muslims can resume enjoying God's full blessings. No Muslim need feel dishonored at being overcome by God, rather than man. To the grass-roots Muslim his message is simple – Islam is better than the false West, and those who take up the sword of Islam, those who unfurl Islam's banners and strike at the great Satan, will be rewarded by God.

Usama's message rings loud to that poor, unemployed Arab youth in that smoky coffeehouse. He brings back honor, pride, and a sense of purpose by promising an end to the lies and torments of the West, as well as rich rewards by doing God's will – and that will is *jihad* against the *Dar al-harb*.

In a letter Usama purportedly sent to Muslims in Pakistan calling on them to stand up for Islam and fight against the U.S., he said: "The world has been divided into two camps: One under the banner of the cross, as Bush, the head of infidelity, said, and another under the banner of Islam."⁴¹ By his statement, Usama confirms Huntington's clash of civilizations, the clash of West versus Islam.

Conclusion

Religion, history, economics, Arab honor and pride, and the thorny Palestinian problem all mix together in the whirling mass of the Arab psyche. Understanding why the Arabs harbor the resentments they do will hopefully take us a long way in coming up with some tangible solutions to a very explosive problem. The current environment in the Middle East is abundantly fertile for growing the type

⁴¹ BBC News Online, 1 November, 2001, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/monitoring/media_reports/newsid_1633000/1633204.stm

of terrorist that Usama bin Ladin wants to produce. A teeming population of unemployed youth, with little prospects for jobs or a real future sit in coffeehouses and wait for just such a charismatic promiser as bin Ladin, to come and promise them a better future in a radical Islamic nation where *Jihad* is the perpetual state and those not of the *Dar al-Islam* (House of Islam), but of the *Dar al-harb* (House of War) will always be seen as the inveterate enemy – the enemy that all Muslims are required to fight to the death.

At one time the Arab world admired and respected the United States. Our democratic values and gritty determination were admirable traits. America's stock reached its high point, during the Suez Crisis, when President Eisenhower bluntly told Britain, France, and Israel, "hands-off" Egypt. Sadly those times have passed and as Professor Bernard Lewis, discussing the loss of our esteemed status, states:

"In our own time this mood of admiration and emulation has, among many Muslims, given way to one of hostility and rejection. In part this mood is surely due to a feeling of humiliation – a growing awareness, among the heirs on an old, proud, and long dominant civilization, of having been overtaken, overborne, and overwhelmed by those whom they regarded as their inferiors."⁴²

If we are to win this war of terrorism, we must attack the problems at the very root. We must begin to understand Islam and understand that Islam can be a religion of peace. We must understand Muslim sensitivities to history and emphasize the positive aspects and achievements that Muslim culture contributed to the greater World culture. There doesn't have to be a "clash of civilizations."

⁴² Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage, *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1990.

Somehow, some-way, we must begin to help Arab nations with the problems of poverty and the “youth bulge”⁴³ in the Middle East. And somehow, someway, there has to be a solution somewhere to the Palestinian problem, or there will always be ten Usama bin Ladins waiting in the wings to replace the one we are trying to capture in Afghanistan.

⁴³ Huntington uses the term “youth bulge” for a disproportionate young population: Huntington, Op. Cit., pp. 117-118.

Chapter 3

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE QUR'AN

To the World's Muslims, the Qur'an (sometimes spelled 'Koran') is the literal word of God, given to the Prophet Muhammad. This essay will make some observations on the Qur'an. It will examine some problems in translation; what the Qur'an says about war, justice and killing; the Qur'an on martyrdom and suicide; and finally what the Qur'an has to say about the status of women.

Most Muslims, particularly Arab Muslims, insist that the Qur'an can only be understood, without error, in the original Arabic, the language in which Allah passed it to Muhammad. This presents a problem, since a great many Muslims live outside the Arab world and do not speak Arabic. As the Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia points out:

“The vast majority of Muslims in the world do not speak Arabic, so the Qur'an in its original language is not accessible to them. Nevertheless, Muslims have traditionally objected to its translation on the grounds that it is the word of God. Islamic doctrine teaches that the Qur'an is the miracle of Muhammad and neither its composition nor its contents can be imitated. However, those Islamic scholars who advocate translation argue that the Qur'anic message is universal. According to the Qur'an, they argue, God never sent a messenger who did not speak the language of the people. For these believers the very verse explaining why the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic implies an obligation to translate and transmit its message to non-Arabs. Translations of the Qur'an into other languages, for the express purpose of making the meaning of the text available to all, may have existed as early as the 9th century AD. For both ceremonial and nonceremonial purposes, however, the Qur'an must be recited in the original Arabic.

The unique Arab literary characteristics of the Qur'an, such as its chantlike rhythms and dramatic images, remain formidable obstacles to translation. The Qur'an was the first prose book in Arabic and it has remained the model of

excellence for Arabic literature. As a sacred book the Qur'an has a value beyond that of literature, but it has also been judged by literary critics of the Arabic language to be artistically unequalled in its beauty. It was due to the position of the Qur'an in Arab Muslim society that Arabic became a world language."¹

Problems in Translation

The problems of translating Arabic to English are many, especially translating the Arabic of the Qur'an to English. The Qur'an is recorded in the classical Arabic of the time of Muhammad (circa 570-632). The classical Arabic of Muhammad can be roughly equated to a modern English speaker reading the old English of Beowulf or Chaucer. Arabs understand the meanings of the classical Arabic because they are taught to understand it. But for the average English speaker, it is difficult if not impossible for us to read Beowulf or Chaucer in the old English because we are not trained in it.

Language changes, it evolves. It evolves not only historically, but culturally as well. The meaning of a word in the 600s may have changed dramatically from what it meant then, to what it means in 2002. To translate the Arabic of the Qur'an into modern English, the translator must be familiar with the significant historical and cultural changes and contexts in the language since the 600s. Even during the time of Muhammad there existed wide cultural boundaries between western (Byzantine) Christianity and Islam. With the broad differences in culture then, just think of what over 1,300 years could do to cultural differences as it relates to translating Muhammad's Arabic into today's English.

The problem of translating from Arabic to English is compounded because

¹ "Qur'an." Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia 2001 <http://encarta.msn.com> (2 Jan. 2002)

Arab and English alphabets are different, therefore the problem of transliteration must be dealt with as well. There are many different English translations of the Qur'an, some of the best-known translators are, N.J. Dawood, whose translation is published by *Penguin Classics*; Professor A.J. Arberry; Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (born 1875 in London, as William Pickthall); and Abdullah Yusuf Ali. Dawood, Arberry, Pickthall, and Ali are considered by many in academia to have produced very good English translations of the Qur'an. Many Muslim scholars consider Ali's and Pickthall's (an Englishman who converted to Islam) translations acceptable commentaries on the Qur'an – commentaries because Muslim scholars believe that you cannot translate the holy word of God, you may comment of its meaning, but it cannot be translated verbatim. As Professor Bernard Lewis points out:

“According to common Muslim belief, one of the proofs of the Qur'an is its miraculously beautiful and inimitable style. Some theologians therefore argued that the Qur'an could not be translated into other languages and that the mere attempt would be a desecration, a form of blasphemy.”²

What you find in the different translations can be surprising. You can see some subtle and some not so subtle differences in translations. For instance: Dawood's translation of Surah (Chapter) 4, verse 34 reads:

“Men have authority over women because God has made the one superior to the other, and because they spend their wealth to maintain them. Good women are obedient. They guard their unseen parts because God has guarded them. As for those from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them and send them to beds apart and beat them. Then if they obey you, take no further action against them. God is high, supreme.”³

² Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West*, (Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, 1993) p. 63.

³ *The Koran*, translated with notes by N.J. Dawood, (Penguin Books, London, England, 5th Edition with revisions, 1993), p. 64. From here on out, all translations by Dawood will be labeled so.

Whereas, Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation of Surah 4, verse 34 reads:

“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because God has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what God would have them guard. As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (Next), refuse to share their beds, (And last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them Means (of annoyance): For God is Most High, great (above you all).”⁴

Note the differences in translation. The second translation has a more moderate flavor. Where Dawood's translation says that “God has made the one *superior* to the other, Ali's translation says that God has given men more *strength* than the other – imparting what could be interpreted as an entirely different meaning. Additionally, Ali's translation tones down “*beat them*” by adding the modifier *lightly*, a modification that does not appear in Dawood's translation. Bernard Lewis in his book, *A Middle East Mosaic: Fragments of Life, Letters and History*, in a section on interpreting scriptures, lists eleven different translations of Surah 4:34, each one with differences in translation. The last translation he lists is by Ahmed Ali in 1987. It reads:

“Men are the guardians of women as God has favoured some with more than others, and because they spend of their wealth (to provide for them). So women who are virtuous are obedient to God and guard the hidden as God has guarded it. As for women you fear are averse, talk to them suavely; then leave them alone in bed (without molesting them) and go to bed with them (when they are willing). If they open out to you, do not seek an excuse for blaming them.”⁵

⁴ *The English Meanings of the Holy Quran*, translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, found at: <http://www.islam101.com/quran/quranYusuf/quranYusuf.html> From here on out, all translations by Ali will be labeled so.

⁵ Quoted in: Bernard Lewis, *A Middle East Mosaic: Fragments of Life, Letters and History*, (The Modern Library, New York, 2001), p. 185.

Professor Lewis in discussing the eleven different translations of the same verse in his book explains that, “While they differ in interpretation and emphasis, all but one agree on the general purport of the Arabic words. The exception is the translation of Ahmed Ali published in 1987, in which the Arabic verb *daraba*, with the normal meaning of ‘to hit,’ ‘to strike’ or ‘to beat’ is rendered in an entirely different way.” The Professor goes on in a footnote and states: “To justify this rendering, Dr. Ahmed Ali offers examples of the use of the verb *daraba*, normally ‘to strike’ or ‘to beat’ as a euphemism for ‘to have sexual intercourse,’ as well as the more usual Arabic *wati’a*, literally, ‘to trample.’ Such euphemisms are common – e.g., the biblical use of ‘know’ and farmyard English to ‘cover’ in this sense. Classical Arabic, a language used over a vast area for a very long period, has many.”⁶ This demonstrates some of the difficulties with translation, leading to what could be some very different interpretations. And this compounds the problem of interpretation, because even in the Arabic version, the meaning of what the Qur’an says, much like the Bible, is already subject to a variety of interpretations by Muslim scholars and clerics.

Some Quotes from the Qur’an on War, Justice, and Killing

For the purpose of quoting some pertinent (to the current crisis) verses from the Qur’an, I will quote both N.J. Dawood’s and Abdullah Yusuf Ali’s translations.

An Eye for an Eye?

Surah 2:178 (Dawood):

“Believers, retaliation is decreed for you in bloodshed: a free man for a free man, a slave for a slave, and a female for a female. He who is pardoned by his aggrieved brother shall be prosecuted according to usage and shall pay

⁶ Lewis, *ibid.*, pp. 183, 185.

him a liberal fine. This is a merciful dispensation from your Lord. He that transgresses thereafter shall be sternly punished.”

Surah 2:178 (Ali):

“O ye who believe! the law of equality is prescribed to you in cases of murder: the free for the free, the slave for the slave, the woman for the woman. But if any remission is made by the brother of the slain, then grant any reasonable demand, and compensate him with handsome gratitude, this is a concession and a Mercy from your Lord. After this whoever exceeds the limits shall be in grave penalty.”

The above quote is equivalent to the Bible’s “an eye for an eye.” The verse is a prescription or remedy for the blood feud, a common occurrence in Arabia at the time of Muhammad.

Jihad

The next quote deals with *Jihad*⁷ and speaks of setting limits.

Surah 2:190-194 (Dawood)

“Fight for the sake of God those that fight against you, but do not attack them first. God does not love the aggressors.

Slay them wherever you find them. Drive them out of the places from which they drove you. Idolatry is more grievous than bloodshed. But do not fight them within the precincts of the Holy Mosque unless they attack you there; if they attack you put them to the sword. Thus shall the unbelievers be rewarded: but if they mend their ways, know that God is forgiving and merciful.

⁷ *Jihad* in its literal Arabic translation means “struggle.” It is a striving or struggle to do the will of God. There are two connotations of Jihad, the Greater Jihad or personal struggle to do what is right, and the Lesser Jihad, or the struggle to defend Islam – and the defense of Islam includes military defense or “holy war.” Allied to the concept of Jihad are the terms, *Dar al-Islam* (House of Islam), and *Dar al-harb* (House of War).

Fight against them until idolatry is no more and God's religion reigns supreme. But if they desist, fight none except the evil-doers.

A sacred month for a sacred month: sacred things too are subject to retaliation. If anyone attacks you, attack him as he attacked you. Have fear of God, and know that God is with the righteous."

Surah 2:190-194 (Ali):

"Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for God loveth not transgressors.

And slay them wherever ye catch them, and turn them out from where they have Turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque, unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith.

But if they cease, God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

And fight them on until there is no more Tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in God; but if they cease, Let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression.

The prohibited month for the prohibited month,- and so for all things prohibited,- there is the law of equality. If then any one transgresses the prohibition against you, Transgress ye likewise against him. But fear God, and know that God is with those who restrain themselves."

The above quote is generally considered by many Muslim scholars to be the equivalent to a *bellum justum*, or just war, a war of self-defense, a war conducted for a just cause (the defense of Islam), a war of last resort, and a war conducted with proportionality, i.e., the attacker should only use the amount of force that is proportional to the (just) ends being sought ("*If anyone attacks you, attack him as he attacked you.* ") Then, there are those who take the verse literally as dictum for a

holy war, a *jihad*, a struggle to defend Islam, and there are chapters and verses in the Qur'an that can be interpreted as supporting this theme. For example:

Surah 9:5 (Dawood):

“When the sacred months are over slay the idolaters wherever you find them. Arrest them, besiege them, and lie in ambush everywhere for them. If they repent and take to prayer and the alms levy, allow them to go their way. God is forgiving and merciful.”

Surah 9:5 (Ali):

“But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity, then open the way for them: for God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.”

Surah 9:73 (Dawood):

“Prophet, make war on the unbelievers and the hypocrites and deal rigorously with them. Hell shall be their homes: an evil fate.”

Surah 9:73 (Ali):

“O Prophet! strive hard against the unbelievers and the Hypocrites, and be firm against them. Their abode is Hell,- an evil refuge indeed.”

Surah 9:123 (Dawood):

“Believers, make war on the infidels who dwell around you. Deal firmly with them. Know that God is with the righteous.”

Surah 9:123 (Ali):

“O ye who believe! fight the unbelievers who gird you about, and let them find firmness in you: and know that God is with those who fear Him.”

Thus, you can see that as the Qur'an is written, it calls for war on the unbelievers. There are numerous references to slaying them (unbelievers), dealing “firmly” with them, and striving hard against them. A particularly violent verse reads thus:

Surah 47:4-6 (Dawood):

“When you meet the unbelievers in the battlefield strike off their heads and, when you have laid them low, bind your captives firmly. Then grant them their freedom or take ransom from them, until War shall lay down her burdens. Thus shall you do. Had God willed, He could Himself have punished them; but He has ordained it thus that He might test you, the one by the other. As for those who are slain in the cause of God, He will not allow their works to perish. He will vouchsafe them guidance and ennoble their state; He will admit them to the Paradise He has made known to them.”

Surah 47:4-6 (Ali):

“Therefore, when ye meet the Unbelievers (in fight), smite at their necks; At length, when ye have thoroughly subdued them, bind a bond firmly (on them): thereafter (is the time for) either generosity or ransom: Until the war lays down its burdens. Thus (are ye commanded): but if it had been Allah's Will, He could certainly have exacted retribution from them (Himself); but (He lets you fight) in order to test you, some with others. But those who are slain in the Way of Allah,- He will never let their deeds be lost. Soon will He guide them and improve their condition, And admit them to the Garden which He has announced for them.”

Just as you may find a verse that exhorts *jihad*, you can find a verse that compels justice.

Justice

Surah 16:126-128 (Dawood):

“If you punish, let your punishment be commensurate with the wrong that has been done you. But it shall be best for you to endure your wrongs in patience. Be patient, then: God will grant you patience. Do not grieve for the unbelievers, nor distress yourself at their intrigues. God is with those who keep from evil and do good works.”

Surah 16:126 (Ali):

“And if ye do catch them out, catch them out no worse than they catch you out: But if ye show patience, that is indeed the best (course) for those who are patient. And do thou be patient, for thy patience is but from God; nor grieve over them: and distress not thyself because of their plots. For God is with those who restrain themselves, and those who do good.”

Surah 17:33 (Dawood):

“You shall not kill any man whom God has forbidden you to kill, except for a just cause. If a man is slain unjustly, his heir shall be entitled to satisfaction. But let him not carry his vengeance too far, for his victim will in turn be assisted and avenged.”

Surah 17:33 (Ali):

“Nor take life - which God has made sacred - except for just cause. And if anyone is slain wrongfully, we have given his heir authority (to demand qisas or to forgive): but let him not exceed bounds in the matter of taking life; for he is helped (by the Law).”

Martyrdom and Suicide

Martyrdom is a hot topic since 9/11. Were the terrorists who flew airliners into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and crashed in Pennsylvania, martyrs? Or were they simply committing suicide? The Qur'an is replete with references to martyrdom:

Surah 3:157-158 (Dawood):

“If you should die or be slain in the cause of God, His forgiveness and His mercy would surely be better than all the riches they amass. If you should die or be slain, before Him you shall all be gathered.”

Surah 3:157-158 (Ali):

“And if ye are slain, or die, in the way of Allah, forgiveness and mercy from Allah are far better than all they could amass. And if ye die, or are slain, Lo! it is unto Allah that ye are brought together.”

Surah 3:169-171 (Dawood):

“Never think that those who were slain in the cause of God are dead. They are alive, and well provided for by their Lord; pleased with His gifts and rejoicing that those they have left behind, who have not yet joined them, have nothing to fear or to regret; rejoicing in God's grace and bounty. God will not deny the faithful their reward.”

Surah 3:169-171 (Ali):

“Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord; They rejoice in the bounty provided by Allah. And with regard to those left behind, who have not yet joined them (in their bliss), the (Martyrs) glory in the fact that on them is no fear, nor have they (cause to) grieve. They glory in the Grace and

the bounty from Allah, and in the fact that Allah suffereth not the reward of the Faithful to be lost (in the least)."

Surah 3:195 (Dawood):

"Those that fled their homes or were expelled from them, and those that suffered persecution for My sake and fought and were slain: I shall forgive them their sins and admit them to gardens watered by running streams, as a reward from God; God holds the richest recompense."

Surah 3:195 (Ali):

"And their Lord hath accepted of them, and answered them: "Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female: Ye are members, one of another: Those who have left their homes, or been driven out therefrom, or suffered harm in My Cause, or fought or been slain,- verily, I will blot out from them their iniquities, and admit them into Gardens with rivers flowing beneath;- A reward from the presence of Allah, and from His presence is the best of rewards."

Surah 4:74 (Dawood):

"Let those who would exchange the life of this world for the hereafter, fight for the cause of God; whoever fights for the cause of God, whether he dies or triumphs, We shall richly reward him."

Surah 4:74 (Ali):

"Let those fight in the cause of Allah Who sell the life of this world for the hereafter. To him who fighteth in the cause of Allah,- whether he is slain or gets victory - Soon shall We give him a reward of great (value)."

Surah 4:100 (Dawood):

“He that leaves his dwelling to fight for God and His apostle and is then overtaken by death, shall be rewarded by God. God is forgiving and merciful.”

Surah 4:100 (Ali):

“He who forsakes his home in the cause of Allah, finds in the earth Many a refuge, wide and spacious: Should he die as a refugee from home for Allah and His Messenger, His reward becomes due and sure with Allah. And Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.”

Surah 22:58-59 (Dawood):

“As for those that have fled their homes for the cause of God and afterwards died or were slain, God will surely make a generous provision for them. God is the most munificent Provider. He will receive them well: all-knowing is God, and benignant.”

Surah 22:58-59 (Ali):

“Those who leave their homes in the cause of Allah, and are then slain or die,- On them will Allah bestow verily a goodly Provision: Truly Allah is He Who bestows the best provision. Verily He will admit them to a place with which they shall be well pleased: for Allah is All-Knowing, Most Forbearing.”

What are the rewards of the martyr?

Surah 56:15-24 (Dawood):

“They shall recline on jeweled couches face to face, and there shall wait on them immortal youths with bowls and ewers and a cup of purest wine (that will neither pain their heads nor take away their reason); with fruits of their

own choice and flesh of fowls they relish. And theirs shall be the dark-eyed houris, chaste as hidden pearls: a guerdon for their deeds.”

Surah 56:15-24 (Ali):

“(They will be) on Thrones encrusted (with gold and precious stones), Reclining on them, facing each other. Round about them will (serve) youths of perpetual (freshness), With goblets, (shining) beakers, and cups (filled) out of clear-flowing fountains: No after-ache will they receive therefrom, nor will they suffer intoxication: And with fruits, any that they may select: And the flesh of fowls, any that they may desire. And (there will be) Companions with beautiful, big, and lustrous eyes,- Like unto Pearls well-guarded. A Reward for the deeds of their past (life).”

Surah 78:31-34 (Dawood):

“As for the righteous, they shall surely triumph. Theirs shall be gardens and vineyards, and high-bosomed maidens for companions: a truly overflowing cup.”

Surah 78:31-34 (Ali):

“Verily for the Righteous there will be a fulfillment of (the heart's) desires; Gardens enclosed, and grapevines; Companions of equal age; And a cup full (to the brim).”

Houris (beautiful virgins), maidens, and companions are mentioned many times in the Qur'an as rewards for the righteous. They are placed in paradise to satisfy the righteous man's desires. Thus you can understand a little of the motivation of the suicide bomber who seeks to become a martyr.

Suicide

What does the Qur'an say about suicide? It can be argued that the terrorists of 9/11 (and for that matter any suicide bomber) committed suicide.

Surah 4:29: (Dawood):

“Believers, do not consume your wealth among yourselves in vanity, but rather trade with it by mutual consent. Do not destroy yourselves. God is merciful to you...”

Surah 4:29 (Ali):

“O ye who believe! Eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities: But let there be amongst you Traffic and trade by mutual good-will: Nor kill (or destroy) yourselves: for verily God hath been to you Most Merciful!”

Furthermore, in the *Hadith* (recorded traditions of the Prophet) it states:

Translation of Sahih Bukhari, *Volume 2, Book 23, Number 446*:

Narrated Abu Huraira:-

“The Prophet said, "He who commits suicide by throttling shall keep on throttling himself in the Hell Fire (forever) and he who commits suicide by stabbing himself shall keep on stabbing himself in the Hell-Fire.”

Therefore you can see that Islam clearly states that it is a sin to commit suicide, it is stated so both in the Qur'an and in the Hadith. The radical terrorists know this, but they get around this prohibition by rationalizing – by saying that the martyr is simply the instrument in God's war. They are the bullet in Allah's gun, and it is Allah that pulls the trigger, thrusting the bullet toward the enemy. This is the twisted reasoning that radical Islam uses to justify suicide bombings.

Women

What does the Qur'an say about women? How are they treated in Islam?

Earlier in this essay, we have already seen how Surah 4:34 states that "Men have authority over women because God has made the one superior to the other..."

But what else does the Qur'an say?

Surah 4:11 (Dawood):

"A male shall inherit twice as much as a female."

Surah 4:11 (Ali):

"Allah (thus) directs you as regards your Children's (Inheritance): to the male, a portion equal to that of two females..."

Surah 2:223 (Dawood):

"Women are your fields: go, then, into your fields whence you please."

Surah 2:223 (Ali):

"Your wives are as a tilth unto you; so approach your tilth when or how ye will..."

Surah 2:228 (Dawood):

"Women shall with justice have rights similar to those exercised against them, although men have a status above women."

Surah 2:228 (Ali):

“...And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable; but men have a degree (of advantage) over them...”

Surah 2:233 (Dawood):

“Mothers shall give suck to their children for two whole years if the father wishes the sucking to be completed.”⁸

Surah 2:233 (Ali):

“The mothers shall give suck to their offspring for two whole years, if the father desires to complete the term.”

In Islam a man may marry up to four women, although the Qur'an adds that if a man cannot treat all wives equally, it is preferable to marry only one. In practice, however, most Muslim men are monogamous.

Surah 4:3 (Dawood):

“...you may marry other women who seem good to you: two, three, or four of them. But if you fear that you cannot maintain equality among them, marry one only or any slave-girls you may own. This will make it easier for you to avoid injustice.”

Surah 4:3 (Ali):

⁸ In context this verse applies to the divorced mother. It requires a divorced mother to breast-feed her child for two years, if the father so desires, but it also requires the father to provide for the divorced mother and child.

“...Marry women of your choice, Two or three or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or (a captive) that your right hands possess, that will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice.”

Surah 33:51 (Dawood):

“You may put off any of your wives you please and take to your bed any of them you please. Nor is it unlawful for you to receive any of those whom you have temporarily set aside. That is more proper, so that they may be contented and not vexed, and may all be pleased with what you give them. God knows what is in your hearts. He is all-knowing and gracious.”

Surah 33:51 (Ali):

“Thou mayest defer (the turn of) any of them that thou pleasest, and thou mayest receive any thou pleasest: and there is no blame on thee if thou invite one whose (turn) thou hadst set aside. This were nigher to the cooling of their eyes, the prevention of their grief, and their satisfaction - that of all of them - with that which thou hast to give them: and God knows (all) that is in your hearts: and God is All-Knowing, Most Forbearing.”

Thus you can see that women are treated differently than men in Islam, they are certainly not considered the equal to men.

The Qur'an in Context

I must give some words of caution on reading verses in the Qur'an without understanding the context, both historically and textually. The Qur'an is written as Muhammad was supposed to have received it – textually, culturally, historically and linguistically, it lies in the middle 600s, the time of Muhammad. When the Qur'an was written it was an enlightened document. It provided for standards of justice, morality, and equality that just did not exist at the time. Before

Muhammad received the Qur'an, it was a typical Arab practice to kill unwanted baby girls. The Qur'an expressly forbids this act. Women were like chattel in Arabia before the Qur'an. The Qur'an did give them some rights – rights to inheritance (albeit unequal). Rights that they did not have before – rights in divorce, rights to justice when they are divorced, etc. – the Qur'an made dramatic changes to how women were treated.

Unfortunately, the Qur'an is a 600s document, and since it is the literal, immutable word of God, it cannot be changed. This does not mean that different interpretations can be drawn from what the Qur'an says, it just makes it very difficult to come up with a different meaning for a 21st Century reader.

It could be argued that some of the verses I have quoted above could be taken out of context – perhaps, but my intent is to give a feeling, a flavor for what the Qur'an says on topics pertinent to today's crisis. I hope I have succeeded in giving a sense of the difficulty in translating the Qur'an. I hope I have given some impression on what the Qur'an says about war, justice and killing – about martyrdom (and its rewards) and suicide, and about the status of women in Islam.

Chapter 4

THE GOLDEN AGE OF ISLAM

The Causes of Islam's Rise

While Western Christendom and European Civilization were mired in the Medieval, Dark Ages, Islam was at the pinnacle of enlightenment. For 400 years, from the mid 800s until the sack of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258, Arab civilization was unparalleled in splendor and learning. Under the rule of the Caliphs, art, architecture, medicine, mathematics, chemistry and engineering made enormous advances. Western society gained Arabic numerals to replace the awkward Roman ones. The Arabs refined Algebra,¹ introduced the concept of “zero,” and developed trigonometry. Arab astronomers developed the astrolabe (an instrument used by early astronomers for solving problems relating to time and the position of the stars) and accurate calendars. Arab physicians established medicine as a science based on observation and experiment rather than guess.²

How did Islam reach this zenith? By A.D. 750 Islam had conquered over half the known world. The Islamic empire burst out of the Arabian Peninsula, swept over the desert sands of Egypt and North Africa, reached deep into the medieval kingdoms of Spain, and conquered the lands and magnificent cities that were once the great Persian Empire. The creation of this vast empire, unifying half the known world under one faith and language, without internal political boundaries, and largely free from external attack was a momentous beginning. The great

¹ The word Algebra comes from the Arabic word *al-jabr*, or transposition, a word that appeared in the title of an early Arab text and was adopted as the European word.

² It was the rudiments of this observation and experiment that later developed into modern scientific method.

trade routes between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean were now protected under one empire and trade flourished.

Trade and ideas began to flow freely across the Asian continent to the empire of Byzantium and the developing kingdoms in the West. The ideas and wisdom of China, India, Persia, ancient Greece, Rome and Egypt were written down and spread by Islamic scholars – Islamic scholars who had developed their inquiring traditions and exacting methods from researching and recording the Qur'an and *hadith*.³ Muslim scholars recorded and transcribed the great texts of the Greeks – Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, and others – and this recording of the great Hellenistic thinkers had a huge impact on early Muslim thought, and helped advance the arts and sciences of the time.

One hugely significant Chinese innovation had an enormous impact on the spread of these great ideas and wisdom. In the mid-8th century, Chinese paper-making technology arrived in the Islamic Empire. This critical knowledge allowed the mass production of paper, which in turn made large personal and public libraries possible. The works of Aristotle and other great Greek thinkers were transcribed by Arabic calligraphers and included in the libraries of Cairo, Damascus, and Baghdad. Arabic scholars also, began to record their own important discoveries. The great physician, philosopher, encyclopedist, mathematician, and astronomer, Ibn Sina (known in the West as Avicenna) produced a monumental work on medicine, which became known to the West as the “Canon,” and was translated into Latin in the 12th Century.

The unification of the Islam into one vast empire with a common language, the incorporation of the conquered culture's technologies and ideas and the spread of those technologies and ideas through open and flourishing trade, the

³ The written traditions of Muhammad. The written record of what Muhammad was to have said or done in particular situations.

mass-producing and recording of the great texts and thought – all contributed to the rise of Islam and to the period of Islam’s “golden age.”

In the next chapter we will examine the fall of Islam from the pinnacle of enlightenment – by looking at what Professor Bernard Lewis has termed by his question, “What went wrong with Muslim Civilization?”

Chapter 5

THE DECLINE OF ISLAM FROM ITS GOLDEN AGE

The Causes for the Fall of Islamic Enlightenment

Muslim civilization, once the pinnacle of enlightenment, has today fallen far from the lofty heights of its brightest times. Why did Islam's Golden Age come to an end? What caused the decline of Islamic enlightenment?

Of course, as with the decline of any empire or civilization, the causes and explanations are complex – but as a broad overview, let's examine three key areas that contributed to the decline – politics, economics, and religion.

Politics

Politically, Islam declined because of military revolts, wars of succession and a loss of central authority. Islam's empire began to disintegrate during the rule of the Abbasid Caliphs (750-1258). The empire became too vast for Abbasid control. Grumbling and disrespect for the opulent Caliphate was common. There were many Muslims who felt that the Caliphs had become too fat and hedonistic, and were far removed from the example set by Muhammad and the early Caliphs. By the year 800 a Caliphate had been set up in Cordoba, Spain, freeing Muslim Spain and North Africa from Baghdad's rule. In the early 900s a Fatamid¹ dynasty began in Egypt, freeing Egypt, Palestine, and much of Southern Syria from Abbasid rule. Essentially there were now three caliphs: one in Cairo, one in Cordoba in Spain, and one at Baghdad. About 1000 A.D. Christian forces began to retake Spain and Sicily. Large tribes of warlike Turks were spreading

¹ A group that claimed descent from Muhammad's daughter Fatima.

into the southern and western parts of the empire and into Persia. These incursions and loss of territory, the split of authority, and loss of centralized power, obviously contributed to the decline, along with the impact of the Crusades and the Mongol invasion of 13th Century.

Economics

During Islam's Golden Age, under the single Caliphate, trade flourished throughout the empire. Coffee, sugar and other spices were grown in the empire, and exported to distant lands. With the Caliphate split, and central authority gone, trade began to decline. Christian nations spread, found other sources of coffee, sugar and spices, and began to create their own trade routes and trading empires. In fact the tables had turned – Arabs now found coffee and sugar were cheaper if purchased from a Christian or Jewish merchant. Without the stabilizing influence of a single Caliphate, the civil wars and internal problems became the focus of the Islamic rulers and the concentration in trade fell away.

Religion

Religious squabbles and differences began to appear throughout the Islamic empire, resulting in splinter groups. Aristotelian logic, adopted early on as a framework to build on science and philosophy, was seen to be undermining the beliefs of educated Muslims. Skepticism was on the rise and Muslim orthodoxy appeared to be declining.

Many Muslim scholars and theologians began a call for a return to the pure ways of Muhammad and early Islam. One famous Islamic philosopher and theologian, Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (1058-1111 A.D.), wrote a book entitled, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers (Tahafut al-falasifa)*, which was an attack upon Islamic speculative theology and Greek philosophy. Al-Ghazali claimed that Greek

philosophy was bankrupt and could not be trusted – it could not lead to anything meaningful about the reality of Allah. Al-Ghazali exhorted Muslims to return to orthodoxy. He proclaimed that philosophy was Satan’s trap, leading to the pits of Hell. Shortly thereafter schools limited their teaching to the study of the Qur’an and Islamic scientific inquiry came to a halt.

What Holds Back Islamic Society Now?

The imminent Islamic historian, Bernard Lewis, points to factors that he believes, keeps Islamic society from reaching parallels with Western society and culture. He states that the lack of a role for women in Islamic society, contributes to Islam’s stagnancy.

“Another approach has been to view the main culprit as the relegation of women to an inferior position in Muslim society, which deprives the Islamic world of the talents and energies of half its people and entrusts the other half’s crucial early years of upbringing to illiterate and downtrodden mothers. The products of such an education, it has been said, are likely to grow up either arrogant or submissive, and unfit for a free, open society.”²

I will end this essay with an observation of what Professor Lewis believes to be the ultimate restraint to any Islamic return to a “golden age”:

“To a Western observer, schooled in the theory and practice of Western freedom, it is precisely the lack of freedom – freedom of the mind from constraint and indoctrination, to question and inquire and speak; freedom of the economy from corrupt and pervasive mismanagement; freedom of women from male oppression; freedom of citizens from tyranny – that underlies so many of the troubles of the Muslim world.”³

² Bernard Lewis, “What Went Wrong?” *The Atlantic Monthly*, January 2002, p. 45.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

Chapter 6

SHI'AH ISLAM

Islam or the Muslim world is divided into two main sects: Shi'ah and Sunni. The Sunni sect represents the great majority of Muslims, whereas Shi'ite Muslims represent between 10 – 15 percent of Muslims worldwide. Sunnis derive their name as being followers of the Sunna (practices and example of Muhammad). Shi'ite Islam is essentially the state religion of Iran and Shi'ites represent approximately 50 percent of the Muslims of Iraq. Shi'ah Muslims are also significant minorities in Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and Bahrain. Both the Shi'ah and Sunni sects essentially follow the same general beliefs, they believe in the Prophet Muhammad as God's messenger, and believe in the basic tenets of the Qur'an. Shi'ites differ from Sunnis on two main points, the succession to the Prophet Muhammad, and the religious authority in Islam after him.

In 656 A.D., the third Caliph (*Kalifah* or successor to the Muslim leadership) Uthman was assassinated by a group of Arab mutineers from the Egyptian army. This set in motion the circumstance that led to the first Arab civil war and disputes over the succession to the Caliphate. The mutineers installed Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law (Ali had married the Prophet's daughter Fatima) as Caliph. The backers of Ali believed that only Ali as a descendent of Muhammad, the first male convert¹ to Islam, and one of the Prophet's loyal companions, should be Caliph – they were called *Shi'at Ali* (partisans of Ali) and hence the designation, Shi'ite. Ali ruled for only five tumultuous years, during this time the Caliphate was contested by a number of Muhammad's companions

¹ Khadija, Muhammad's first wife is believed to be his first convert.

including Muhammad's wife Aisha. Aisha had allied herself with Mu'awiya, who was a member of the important Umayya clan of Mecca and a cousin of the murdered Caliph Uthman. Aisha and Mu'awiya fought two battles against Ali, in the first, Ali achieved a victory, but the second proved inconclusive and Ali submitted his claim to the Caliphate to arbitration. The arbitration went against Ali, which caused many of his followers to desert him (especially a group known as the Kharijites). In January 661 Ali was assassinated – and this assassination eventually led to the major schism in Islam, the Shi'ah-Sunni split.

After the death of Ali, Ali's son Hassan proclaimed himself Caliph, but soon relinquished the claim to Mu'awiya in return for Mu'awiya's promise that upon Mu'awiya's death, the Caliphate would return to Hassan or his heir. Mu'awiya was now recognized as Caliph and he established a Ummayyad dynasty that would last a hundred years.

After the death of Hassan, Ali's second son, Husayn became the leader of the Shi'ahs. Husayn claimed the legitimate right to be Caliph by right of descent from the Prophet and Ali. Upon the death of Mu'awiya in 680 A.D., Husayn led his followers in hopes of having his claim of succession heard. The soldiers of the Caliph Yazid, son of Mu'awiya, trapped Husayn in the desert at Karbala and a battle ensued. Yazid won the battle and Husayn was killed (and supposedly beheaded). It is from this point in history, when the Shi'ahs were thus alienated by the loss of their leader and defeat in battle, that Shi'ah Islam was born. The Shi'ites celebrate the death and martyrdom of Husayn with an annual march or procession in which Shi'ahs, in a frenzied demonstration of pious suffering, beat and whip themselves with clubs and chains.

The disagreement between Sunnis and Shi'ah revolves around the claim to the leadership of the Muslim community. The Sunnis claim that the first four Caliphs, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali are the "rightly guided" Caliphs, as

companions and immediate successors of the Prophet. The rightly guided Caliphs were all seen as chosen democratically and freely by the Muslim community (*Umma*).

The Shi'ah's claim that the Prophet Muhammad personally chose Ali as his successor and therefore Ali was the rightfully appointed *Kalifah*, and the first *Imam*. They reject the claim of leadership to anyone other than Ali or his direct descendants. As one scholar states:

“Unlike the Sunnis who were loyal to the duly empowered caliph, the Shi'ahs professed loyalty to an *Imam*, leader or guide, who was a direct descendant of Ali, on the grounds that Ali allegedly had inherited from the Prophet both his spiritual and secular sovereignty, i.e., the power to both interpret and to enforce the canon law. Thus in lieu of the caliph, who was imbued with no spiritual authority by the Sunnis other than to set an example for piety, the Shi'ahs recognized an *Imam* who, until his disappearance, was regarded as an infallible teacher and the only source of religious instruction and guidance.”²

Twelvers and Seveners

Shi'ah Islam is itself divided into sects. The two major Shi'ite sects are the Twelvers and the Seveners or Isma'ilis. The Twelvers believe that there was a legitimate line of descendants down to the Twelfth *Imam*, a child named Muhammad al-Askari who simply disappeared sometime around 878 AD without leaving any heir. The Twelvers believe that the Twelfth *Imam* is not dead, but in a state of occultation. This Twelfth *Imam* will remain concealed until the time near the end of the world when Shi'ah Islam will be proclaimed supreme. When the Twelfth *Imam* emerges, he will be proclaimed the *Mahdi* or Messiah. The Shi'ites explain the concept of occultation like the sun being behind a cloud – you can't see it, but it is still there. The Twelfth *Imam* guides the faithful through the

² Caesar E. Farah, Ph.D., *Islam*, (Barron's Educational Series, Inc, Hauppauge, NY, 2000), p. 174.

indirect, albeit divinely inspired leadership of the *Ayatollahs* (signs of God). The Ayatollah Khomeini claimed descent from the Prophet through the seventh *Imam* and thus the right to govern the Shi'ah community.

The Seveners or Isma'ilis claim there were only seven legitimate *Imams*. They honor the succession down to the seventh *Imam*. The Isma'ilis claim that their successor Imam is also in hiding and they await his return as Mahdi as well.

Chapter 7

SUFISM

Sufism, in Islam, is the belief and practice of mysticism and asceticism. The Arabic word *Sufi* (man of wool) comes from the early Muslim mystics who wore coarse woolen garments. The aim of the Sufi is to join with God, and Sufis believe that a part of God resides in every living human being. The Qur'an, Surah (chapter) 32, verses 7-9, states: "He first created man from clay, then made his offspring from a drop of humble fluid. He moulded him and breathed into him of His spirit."¹ Since God breathed his spirit into man, God resides within man. It is seeking God within the inner-self for which Sufis strive.

Sufism originated as a reaction to the worldliness of the early Caliphs and to certain features of orthodox Islam, in particular, the orthodox legalism of the Shari'ah². Sufis believed that the mere observance of religious law was an outward manifestation of conformity only, that to truly know God, one had to seek the essence of God within, to personally experience the divine through meditation and self-denial. Early Sufis highlighted the awesome fear of God and emphasized ascetic self-denial. Ascetic self-denial created the environment for the Sufi to find the *tariqah* (the path) that would lead to becoming one with the creator. As one Islamic scholar states:

"The Sufi differs from the non-Sufi Muslim in that the former seeks an awareness of the Lord while the soul is still entrapped in its body, whereas the

¹ *The Koran*, translated with notes by N.J. Dawood, (Penguin Books, London, England, 5th Edition with revisions, 1993), p. 291.

² Shari'ah – Islamic Law based upon the Qur'an and the Hadith (the recorded traditions of the Prophet Muhammad).

non-Sufi Muslim is content to pursue the path laid out in the holy book of Islam, which, if followed carefully, will bring about the ultimate presence with God following death, resurrection, and the judgment that he or she expects to pass and thus be ushered into the presence of God eternally.”³

The Sufi mystic follows a path of seven stages: repentance, abstinence, renunciation, poverty, patience, trust in God, and the last stage, *fana*, which is passing away in God, or dissolving into the divine.

Early on the Sufis were persecuted as heretics. In 922, Mansur al-Hallaj, proclaimed, “I am the truth,” which was his way of proclaiming that he had reached *fana* and joined in unity with God. He was executed for his heresy. This persecution led the Sufi to use caution when talking in public. They began to use strong metaphors in expressing mystic yearning. Poetry became a wonderful vehicle in which the Sufi could express his desires and longings for unity with God. The greatest of the Sufi poets, was the Persian, Jalal-al-Din al-Rumi. His intensely moving verse is considered the acme of mystic poetry and is regarded today as having great literary merit. In addition to his poetry, al-Rumi is credited with instituting devotional dance into Sufi practice. It is this devotional dance that lead to the spinning dance of the “whirling Dervish.”

Sufism reached a degree of acceptance by orthodox Islam in the late 11th and early 12th centuries. Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (considered by many Muslims to be Islam’s equivalent to St. Augustine) was struggling to find a personal and satisfying relationship with God, and it was in his struggles that he discovered Sufism. It was Al-Ghazali, in his book, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, who caused Islamic scholars to reject Hellenistic thought and philosophy and to turn to teachings in the Qur’an as perfectly manifested by the Prophet and the

³ Caesar E. Farah, Ph.D., *Islam*, (Barron’s Educational Series, Inc, Hauppauge, NY, 2000), p. 209.

“Rightly Guided Caliphs.”⁴ Al-Ghazali believed that “the path to God can not be intellectually delineated, but lies rather in a mystical experience.”⁵

In the 12th century the Sufis saw a need to organize. A Sufi wise-man, *Shaykh*, or spiritual master, would typically lead the order (there were about twelve orders at this time). Disciples, or members of the Sufi brotherhood were known as *faqirs* (fakirs), or *darwish* (dervish). It was the wandering mendicant or *faqir* who was less than pious (sometimes even fraudulent) that led to the term fakir taking on the Western meaning (faker) of someone having a false or misleading appearance. Sufi organizations often included rigid rituals and long periods of intensive training as a novice, before being accepted into the order. Sufi mystical practices included the chanting of divine phrases, breath control, communal recitations, and ecstatic dancing.

Today there are over 100 orders of Sufis throughout Islam – in Sunni as well as Shia Islam. One prominent brotherhood is the *Mawlawiya*, (Mevlevis) or the “Whirling Dervishes,” with headquarters in Konya, Turkey.

⁴ The “Rightly Guided Caliphs” are the first four Caliphs, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali.

⁵ Farah, *Op.Cit.*, p. 217.

Chapter 8

SHARI'AH: THE LAW OF ISLAM

In Islam, unlike Western civilization, there is no separation between church and state, no separation of the religious from the temporal. The Qur'an, the *Sunna*, and *Hadith* guide all of man's deeds, actions and conduct. It is the Qur'an, the *Sunna* and *Hadith* that are encompassed in the body of Islamic law known as *Shari'ah*. The Arabic word *Shari'ah* translates as, "the road to the watering hole," the true, correct and straight path for Muslims to follow.¹

The Qur'an itself, covers specifics like the laws dealing with murder and theft, the laws of marriage, inheritance, and adultery, but apart from these specifics it provides only general guidelines and principles for "right" and proper conduct. During Muhammad's lifetime, he was many times called upon to act as a judge for disputes. While he had God's divine revelations for certain cases, in others he would often rely upon the customary laws of the Arab tribes and community in which he was situated.²

After Muhammad's death, the Caliphs and other leaders of the Islamic community, continued to use the Qur'an as the primary source for judgments, however, when the Qur'an did not cover an act or deed, they would often use existing customs and laws of the region in which a decision was required. However, there was a desire to consign all of man's activities into the realm of God, since man was subject to the ultimate judgment of God, then God's law should judge man. As one scholar has noted:

¹ John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1998) p. 78.

“...serious and concerned Muslims tried to bring all human acts under the judgment of their religion, to work out an ideal system of human conduct. In doing so they had to take into account the words of the Qur’an and to interpret them, and also the transmitted memories of the community: how the Prophet was supposed to have acted (his habitual behavior or *sunna*, increasingly recorded in ‘traditions’ or *hadiths*); how early caliphs made decisions; what the accumulated wisdom of the community believed to be the right way to act (the *sunna* of the community).”³

When the Qur’an was silent on a particular act, the words and deeds (*sunna*) of the Prophet would be used to make a decision. The *sunna* “includes what the Prophet said, what he did, and those actions that he permitted or allowed.”⁴ The *sunna* of the Prophet at first were memorized by trained “memorizers,” Muslims who committed the surahs (chapters of the Qur’an) to memory. These recorded memories are known as *hadith*. Sometimes the faithful would write down a surah on parchment, palm leaves, or smooth stones.⁵ Abu Bakr, Muhammad’s father-in-law and successor (also the first Caliph), was compelled to reconquer Arabia. During one of the battles, many of Muhammad’s companions and memorizers, were killed. Fearing a loss of all the memorized surahs of the Qur’an, Omar, another companion of Muhammad urged Abu Bakr to have the Qur’an codified. Abu Bakr tasked Zayd, a one-time aide to Muhammad to commit the Qur’an to writing. Zayd assembled all the various sources to include the memories of Muhammad’s companions and compiled the first complete written text of the Qur’an. At the same time, many of the words, actions, and deeds (*sunna*) of Muhammad were written down as *hadith*. In 657 Zayd was again tasked to collect the various codifications being used at the time and to compile the

² Caesar E. Farah, Ph.D., *Islam*, (Barron’s Educational Series, Inc, Hauppauge, NY, 2000), p. 156.

³ Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, (Warner Books, New York, 1991) p. 66.

⁴ Esposito, *Op. Cit.*, p. 80.

⁵ Muhammad was illiterate and could not read or write.

“authoritative” version. It is essentially this version of the Qur’an that survives to this day.⁶

Thousands of hadith have been recorded and subjected to a rigorous process of verification by tracing the source of the tradition “...back through a chain of witnesses to the Prophet or a Companion.”⁷

Because the Qur’an did not cover every exigency in Muslim day-to-day life, Muslims began to want to come up with a comprehensive guide that they could consistently use to do the “right” thing – to follow the “straight path.” That desire for an all-inclusive guide “led to the development of the science of law, or jurisprudence (*fiqh*).”⁸ No matter how clear God’s word was seen in the Qur’an, and the *sunna* (as recorded in the *hadith*), sometimes, new situations would arise that required an interpretation. That is when learned religious scholars would try and find an analogy (*qiyas*) to a similar situation in the hadith, one that was similar and relevant to the current problem, this process of using an analogous situation is known as *ijtihad*. The *ijtihad* process was then submitted for general agreement among the community (of other learned religious scholars), and when a consensus (*ijma*) was reached the decision would become the settled law for that particular situation.⁹

Professor Farah, provides more detail: “Through the use of analogical reasoning, a doctrinal point resting on the *Shari’ah* can apply by extension to like points without following any carefully defined formula for such extended use. The jurist could almost always find one case from the multitudinous

⁶ Farah, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 96-97.

⁷ Albert Hourani, *Op. Cit.*, p. 70.

⁸ Esposito, *Op. Cit.*, p. 78.

⁹ Albert Hourani, *Op. Cit.*, p. 68.

accumulation over the centuries that would provide him with the proper precedent for a given legal matter.”¹⁰

Ulama, Mullahs, Muftis, and Fatwas

Ulama refers to the collective body of clerics or religious scholars who are knowledgeable and trained in Islamic beliefs and principles. *Ulama* is a plural term for *alim*. An *alim* is an individual cleric schooled in Islamic thought and dogma. A *mullah* is a local religious leader, who could very well be an *alim*, and therefore part of the *ulama*. A *Mufti* is a specialist in Islamic law, a jurist and scholar deemed competent to issue a *fatwa*, or legal interpretation or brief. A *fatwa* is simply the formal legal opinion of a *Mufti*.

It is the *ulama*, the body of Islamic religious or *shari’ah* scholars who interpret and guide the Muslim community. The *ulama* have played a dominant role, not only in interpreting Islamic law, but also in educating the community as well as instructing and bringing up other Islamic scholars. It is from the *ulama* that the specialist or *Muftis* come, and it is the *Mufti* who present the formal legal opinions (*fatwas*) – generally based upon one of the four schools of (*sunni*) Islamic law.

The Four Schools of Islamic Law

There are four primary Sunni schools of Shari’ah legal thought (*madhhab*), the Hanafi School, the Maliki School, the Shafii School and the Hanbali School – all named after a famous Islamic Shari’ah scholar. These schools will at times differ in an interpretation and it is not unknown for a legal scholar or *Mufti* to feel it is permissible to use the interpretation of “the other” school if it fits the situation. The Shi’ah sect diverge somewhat, and require that a consensus among the legal

¹⁰ Farah, *Op. Cit.*, p. 156.

community cannot be valid unless an *Imam*,¹¹ or his representative – *mujtahid* (interpreter of Islamic law), has taken part in the decision. The important legal school for the Shi'ah sect is the Jafari School.

Today the Shari'ah remains the predominant law of the land in Islamic countries, there are exceptions (Turkey), but for the most part the Shari'ah is the law. In some Muslim states, however, a combination of Shari'ah and legislative laws are used, the Shari'ah for most capital offenses, and legislative laws or ordinances for such things as traffic offenses. The most important concept to remember is that there is no differentiation between spiritual and secular in Islam, there is no separation of church and state.

¹¹ An *Imam* is a spiritual guide within the Shi'ah sect, usually one who can trace descent to the Prophet. The Ayatollah Kohmeini was one such *Imam*.

Chapter 9

THE FAST OF RAMADAN

The Fourth Pillar of Islam

The fourth pillar of Islam is the fast (*sawm*) of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. The Qur'an in Surah 2:185 says: "In the month of Ramadan the Koran was revealed, a book of guidance with proofs of guidance distinguishing right from wrong. Therefore whoever of you is present in that month let him fast."¹ Ramadan is the ninth month of the Muslim calendar, and is sacred to Muslims because it was on the night of the 27th of Ramadan (A.D. 610) that Muhammad received the first words of the Qur'an in a revelation from the Angel Gabriel.

Ramadan is the holy month of obligatory fasting; it is a time of prayer and purification done to remind the faithful of the sufferings of the hungry and the needy. The fast is meant to teach self-discipline and control of the appetites of the flesh – to teach submissiveness and the strength of faith. It is the goal of the devout to lift themselves above the base cravings of the flesh and to seek the power and humility of the spirit. The shared experiences of Ramadan make the holiday, not only a close-knit time for the family, but an excellent time of commitment and celebration within the community as well. The shared constraints of the fast increase spiritual unity and a sense of equality for Muslims everywhere.

¹ *The Koran*, translated by N.J. Dawood (Penguin Books, London, 1993), p. 28.

The timing of the month of Ramadan will vary from year to year as it follows a lunar calendar and will occur on different dates in each year of the Gregorian calendar.² This means that the fast can occur in the shorter days of winter in some years and in other years it will take place in the hot, long days of the summer months. When Ramadan happens in the summer it can be a very trying time, especially in the hot, dry climate of Muslims countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Ramadan starts on the first sighting of the new moon by the appropriate religious authority and ends on the first sighting of the new moon for the next Muslim month, Shawwal.

During the fast Muslims are forbidden from eating, drinking, smoking and engaging in sexual intercourse during daylight hours – except for pregnant women, and those who are young (generally under 10), ill or traveling. Nothing is allowed to pass the lips, not even water. The Qur'an, in Surah 2:187 states: "...Eat and drink until you can tell a white thread from a black one in the light of the coming dawn. Then resume the fast till nightfall and do not approach them (*meaning wives, for sexual relations*), but stay at your prayers in the mosques."³ Those who are ill or traveling are expected to make up for the fast by fasting an equal number of days at a later date. Additionally, those who are able to fast and do not are expected to pay alms for failing to meet their religious obligations. The Qur'an says: "Believers, fasting is decreed for you as it was decreed for those before you; perchance you will guard yourselves against evil. Fast a certain number of days, but if any one among you is ill or on a journey, let him fast a similar number of days later; and for those that cannot endure it there is a

² Ramadan will take place on 5 November 2002, 26 October 2003, 14 October 2004 and 4 October 2005 (all dates are approximate and depend on the official sighting of the new moon).

³ *ibid.*, p. 28

ransom: the feeding of a poor man. He that does good of his own accord shall be well rewarded; but to fast is better for you, if you but knew it.”⁴

In the evening at the prescribed darkness, Muslims will break fast with a light juice drink and some dates. When I was with the United Nations Observer Group in Egypt, headquartered in Ismailia along the Suez Canal, I remember a young Muslim man (who was employed by the U.N. as a cook at our headquarters) offering me a light drink of sugar water and some dates when the first full day of Ramadan had passed. His name was Muhammad. Muhammad never tried to convert any of the U.N. observers to Islam – he never proselytized. But he had a simple sincerity and honesty in his faith that all of us admired. When he offered me to share with him in breaking the fast he was offering a genuine hand of friendship, a reaching out across cultures and faiths. Muhammad was a young man I came to trust and respect. If only there were more such Muhammad’s and more such instances to break cultural barriers.

Daytime activities are generally curtailed, especially if Ramadan falls in the summer. Work hours will be shortened, school hours reduced. Work in government offices all but comes to a standstill. I remember during my time in Egypt, during Ramadan, that it was much easier to get around Cairo during daylight hours, because traffic congestion was reduced (and traffic in Cairo can be maddening – where three lanes of traffic become five). It is at night that activities and socializing picks up.

After sunset families and friends gather for entertaining. Muslims will go out in the evening to shop. The stores and *souks* (markets) come alive with the buzz of activity. Families will gather in the late evening hours for a large meal and then

⁴ Surah 2:183-184, *ibid.*, p. 28

retire for a few hours until just before dawn, when they will rise and have a light meal before resuming the fast.

Fasting during Ramadan has its roots in Judeo-Christian traditions. When Muhammad first began the ministry of Islam, he tried to emulate Jewish and Christian ways. The first *qibla* or direction for Muslim prayer had been Jerusalem. Muhammad had admired many of the convictions and practices of both Jews and Christians, people he called *dhimmi*, or “people of the book,” and he sought to have a fast like the Jews. As one biographer of the Prophet notes:

“...Muhammad had been trying to model the religious life of the *umma* on Judaism, but a few weeks before Badr he had emancipated Islam from the customs of the older faith when he changed the *qibla*. A few days after the victory, on 9 Ramadan, Muhammad declared that the fast of Ashura was no longer obligatory for Muslims; instead they would fast during Ramadan to commemorate their own special *furqan* of Badr. The fast of Ramadan, which was observed for the first time in March 625, became one of the five essential practices of Islam.”⁵

There are several important dates associated with Ramadan – dates that occurred during the month of Ramadan in Muhammad’s lifetime. The death of Muhammad’s first wife Khadijah occurred on the 10th of Ramadan. 17 Ramadan marks the day that the Muslims under the leadership of Muhammad defeated the Quraysh at the decisive battle of Badr in 624, and 20 Ramadan is the date that the city of Mecca surrendered to Muhammad and his followers without a battle. The last ten days of Ramadan are especially sacred, as it was during this timeframe on the 27th of Ramadan (the Night of Power) that Muhammad received his first revelation from God.

⁵ Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet*, (Harper Collins, San Francisco, 1993) p. 179. *Umma* is the community of Islam, the believers. *Furqan* denotes salvation and a separation of the just from the unjust. *ibid.*, p. 178.

Long before Muhammad received the revelation of the Qur'an, the lunar month of Ramadan had been a time when Arab tribes tried to impose prohibitions on fighting and sought to settle disputes and make peace with neighboring tribes. The tradition continues during Ramadan today, as Muslims seek to resolve disagreements and grievances and to make amends for past wrongs.

Ramadan is a time of renewal, a time of reflection, a time when friends and family fast together and feast together. As one Muslim scholar notes: "...Ramadan is one of the most warmly and strictly observed holidays of Islam. Those who seek to avoid it incur severe approbation from their brethren."⁶ In earlier times in Islam those who failed to observe the rules of Ramadan were subject to much more than approbation. An English merchant, who traded in Muslim lands, recorded in 1600: "And for any found drunk in the time of their Ramazan, which is a fast they have one whole month in the year, their law is to melt a ladle full of lead and pour it down their throats. Their manner of fast is [not] to eat or drink any thing, neither water or other, until they see a star appear in the evening; and then they may begin and eat till morning."⁷ This terrible punishment was nothing different than similar cruel punishments exacted by Christians on lawbreakers at the time. The reason I mention it, is the seriousness in which Muslims have regarded the obligations of Ramadan. Today, instead of pouring molten lead down a person's throat, it is social censure and

⁶ Caesar E. Farah, *Islam*, (Barron's Educational Series, Hauppauge, New York, 2000) p. 142.

⁷ Quoted in: Bernard Lewis, *A Middle East Mosaic: Fragments of Life, Letters and History*, (The Modern Library, New York, 2001) p. 231.

condemnation that are meted out for failing to observe the duties prescribed in the Qur'an for the fasting month of Ramadan.

Chapter 10

ISLAM'S THREE HOLY SITES

The three holiest sites in Islam are the Ka'bah in Mecca, the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad in Medina, and the "Noble Sanctuary," or Al-Haram al-Sharif, in Jerusalem.

Mecca and the Ka'bah

The Ka'bah (Arabic for cube) is the holiest shrine in Islam. Situated in Mecca it is the *qibla*, or direction towards which Muslims face five times a day, every day, in prayer. It is to the Ka'bah that pilgrims go each year to satisfy the fifth religious duty or pillar of Islam – the Hajj (pilgrimage). According to legend, the Ka'bah was originally built by Adam, but was subsequently destroyed in the great flood that devastated the Earth. The Prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael are said to have rebuilt the Ka'bah on the site of Adam's original structure.

Nearby the Ka'bah is another holy site, the well of Zamzam. Muslim's believe that the Prophet Abraham was given a revelation by God and was directed to take Hagar (Abraham's concubine) and Ishmael (Abraham's first born son by Hagar) to a barren desert in Arabia (what is now Mecca) and to leave them there. Abraham told Hagar that God had commanded him to leave her and their infant son Ishmael there in the desert. After initially asking Abraham why he was leaving them, Hagar submitted that it was God's will. Hagar and Ishmael were soon without water, and Hagar became frantic. She began running back and forth between two hills, Al-Safa, and Al-Marwa in search of water. God saw her plight and sent the Angel Gabriel down to help her. Gabriel touched his wing to the

earth and where his wing touched, there sprang forth water. This spring of water became known as the well of Zamzam, from which pilgrims on the Hajj drink today. At present, part of the ritual of the Hajj is for the pilgrims to run between the hills of Al-Safa and Al-Marwa, seven times.

According to Islam, Abraham returned to Hagar and Ishmael at Mecca. When Abraham returned to Mecca, God commanded him and his son Ishmael to rebuild the sanctuary of the Ka'bah that Adam had built there before. The Angel Gabriel is said to have shown the site to Abraham and it is on this site that Abraham and Ishmael built the Ka'bah.

The Ka'bah is a small stone structure measuring 36 feet by 30 feet at the base and 18 feet in height. Covering the Ka'bah is the *kiswah* (vesture), a green woven cotton material with Qur'anic verses embroidered in it. In the southeast corner of the Ka'bah is the Black Stone (conjecture has it that the stone is a piece of meteorite). The Black Stone is in fragments, and is joined by a silver band. Legend has it that the Black Stone came from heaven and Abraham used it in his original construction of the Ka'bah. Pilgrims on the Hajj must kiss the Black Stone. Muslims also make their seven ritual circuits (*tawaf*) around the Ka'bah celebrating Abraham's construction of the sanctuary.¹

In the time prior to Muhammad's ministry, the Ka'bah became the place where the desert tribes housed idols of their pagan deities, and there conducted a pilgrimage to worship their desert gods. Supposedly the Ka'bah at one time housed as many as 360 idols, as many as there were days in the lunar calendar. Muhammad began his preaching by calling for removal and destruction of the idols, and to revere the Ka'bah as the sanctuary of the one God, Allah.

¹ For more information on the Ka'bah and the Hajj see: Caesar E. Farah, Ph.D., *Islam*, (Barron's Educational Series, Inc, Hauppauge, NY, 2000).

Muslims also believe that near Mecca, at Mina, Abraham offered Ishmael to God as a sacrifice, and God, satisfied with Abraham's complete submission, accepted a goat instead. Today, the Hajj ceremony ends with the sacrifice of a sheep or goat at Mina.

Mecca is also the birthplace of Muhammad and the place where Muhammad received the revelation of the Qur'an in a cave on Mt. Hira. It is also the place from where Muhammad began his "night journey" or *mi'raj*.

Medina

The second holy site of Islam is the Prophet Muhammad's Mosque and Tomb in Medina. In 622 AD Muhammad departed Mecca with his followers and went north to the town of Yathrib (which became known as *Al-Madinah an-Nabi*, or City of the Prophet, and is today simply called Medina), there he built his first mosque. Originally, the mosque was a small structure with Muhammad's simple apartments adjoining. When the Prophet died in 632 he was buried in his home adjoining the mosque. Today, one of the grandest mosques in the world rises over the site of Muhammad's grave and his first mosque. Additionally, the first two Caliphs, Abu Bakr and Omar are buried next to the Prophet Muhammad (Medina was the center of Muslim government through the first four Caliphs). Although not a required site for pilgrimage, Medina and the Prophets tomb remain a popular pilgrimage for the world's Muslims.

Jerusalem and the Noble Sanctuary

To Muslims Jerusalem is known as *Al-Quds* (the Holy), and is revered as the place from whence Muhammad ascended to the seven heavens on the winged horse *Buraq*, and there in heaven was given instructions by God for Muslim prayer. In East Jerusalem within the walls of the "Old City," lies the "Temple

Mount,” site of Solomon’s temple, which was destroyed by the Babylonians, rebuilt by King Herod and destroyed again in AD 70 by the Romans. The Western Wall or “Wailing Wall,” was the retaining wall for the old temple, and is all that remains of Herod’s construction. Today on the area of the Temple Mount, the Mosque called the “Dome of the Rock,” is built over the rock where Muhammad ascended to heaven (it is also the rock that the Jews believe that Abraham offered Isaac to God as a sacrifice). The Dome of the Rock is situated on the *Al-Haram al-Sharif*, or Noble Sanctuary, an area of approximately 35 acres also containing the *Al Aqsa* Mosque. The *Al-Haram al-Sharif* is the third holiest site in Islam. The Dome of the Rock is located where the Jewish sacred holy of holies was placed in the ancient Hebrew Temple of Solomon

For devout Jews the Temple Mount is where the Messiah will arrive and redemption will take place. To the Jewish faithful, giving up the Temple Mount, is not only giving up a sacred holy site, but giving up redemption as well. The Noble Sanctuary of Islam, being also the Jewish, “Temple Mount,” is one of the biggest points of contention between Palestinians and Jews.

Probably the toughest issue in the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations is how to share control of the Temple Mount-Noble Sanctuary, and it is related to this dispute that the current *intifada* (uprising) began.

On 29 September 2000, Ariel Sharon, then head of the right-wing Likud Party, lead a group of legislators onto the Noble Sanctuary, in protest of then Prime Minister Ehud Barak’s negotiations with the Palestinians. Sharon felt that Barak was about to negotiate away Israeli’s right to visit the mount.

Sharon’s actions proved highly provocative, and were predicted beforehand to cause trouble. Palestinian’s and Muslims worldwide were enraged, and Palestinians immediately mounted protests. Right after Sharon departed the

Noble Sanctuary, a large group of approximately 200-300 Arabs began to throw stones at the 1,000 Israeli riot police who had been assigned to provide protection for Sharon. The Israelis opened fire with rubber coated bullets and injured many Arabs. Thus, began the spiraling turmoil that has brought untold grief, anger, and retribution to the land of Abraham, David, Solomon, Jesus and Muhammad.²

There is a movement among Israelis in Jerusalem that wants to tear down the mosques on the Temple Mount and to rebuild a Third Holy Temple. I have seen T-shirts, posters, and placards, in many Jewish shops in Jerusalem and the Old City that show the Temple Mount with the image of a new temple super-imposed over the Dome of the Rock. This movement incenses the Palestinians, and if it were ever to come about, there would then indeed be a clash of civilizations – a clash that could only end in the total annihilation of one side or the other.

Islam's three holy sites are currently all points of contention. The Noble Sanctuary – Temple Mount for the above stated reason, but the sites of Mecca and Medina have been thrown into contentious argument as well. One of Usama bin Ladin's points of dispute with the Saudi government is his objection to the stationing of American soldiers in Saudi Arabia, the country of Islam's holiest sites. Bin Ladin claims that having U.S. soldiers on Saudi soil defiles Islam. He claims infidels on holy land is an abomination to the devout Muslim.

It is unfortunate and sad, that Islam's three holiest sites are being used in arguments that advance hatred, vengeance, and ultimately death. I can only hope that the strength and peace of Islam can stop this hateful rhetoric, once and for all.

² Lee Hockstader, "Israeli's Tour of Holy Site Ignites Riot," *The Washington Post*, 29 September 2000, p. A22.

Chapter 11

THE HAJJ AND ITS RITUALS

Hundreds of thousands of Muslims from all over the world converge on Mecca and Islam's holiest site each year during the Muslim month of *Dhu al-Hijjah*, to satisfy the sacred religious duty of conducting the *Hajj* or pilgrimage. The Hajj is the fifth pillar or central duty of Islam and must be conducted at least once during a lifetime by every Muslim who can afford the pilgrimage and is physically able to perform it.

The pilgrimage to Mecca and the Ka'bah is a ritual that predates Muhammad and took place in pre-Islamic days. Muslims trace the origins of the Hajj to the Prophet Abraham who is said to have built the Ka'bah with his son Ishmael as a house of God. Tradition has it that Abraham (*Ibrahim* in Arabic) and Ishmael built the Ka'bah on the site that Adam had originally built the first house of worship, which had been destroyed in the Great Flood.

The Qur'an in Surah 3:96-97 states: "The first temple ever built was at Bakkah¹, a blessed site, a beacon for the nations. In it there are veritable signs and the spot where Abraham stood. Whoever enters it is safe. Pilgrimage to the House is a duty to God for all who can make the journey."² Additionally, the Qur'an in the Surah (Chapter) entitled *Al-Hajj* (The Pilgrimage) states (Surah 22:26-29):

¹ Another name for the city of Mecca.

² *The Koran*, translated with notes by N.J. Dawood, (Penguin Books, London, England, 5th Edition with revisions, 1993), pp. 50-51.

“When We prepared for Abraham the site of the Sacred Mosque We said: ‘Worship none besides Me. Keep My House clean for those who walk around it, and those who stand upright or kneel in worship.’ Exhort all men to make the pilgrimage. They will come to you on foot and on the backs of swift camels from every distant quarter; they will come to avail themselves of many a benefit, and to pronounce on the appointed days the name of God over the cattle which He has given them for food. Eat of their flesh, and feed the poor and the unfortunate. Then let the pilgrims spruce themselves, make their vows, and circle the Ancient House.”³

During the Prophet Muhammad’s time, the Ka’bah was used by desert tribes to house their pagan idols, and part of Muhammad’s ministry was to denounce this idolatry, and to convince the Arabs that there was only one God and that the Ka’bah was the house of the one God.

Prior to the 19th Century, for many in the Muslim world, conducting the pilgrimage and traveling the great distance to Mecca typically required long and arduous travel by caravan. During these times, there were three great caravans that the pilgrims would generally travel in, one that started from Cairo, another that began in Baghdad, and another that commenced in Istanbul and went by way of Damascus.

Muslims can conduct the *Hajj*, or greater pilgrimage, or they can conduct the *Umra*, or lesser pilgrimage. The *umra* can take place at any time during the year, but the *Hajj* can only take place between the 8th and 13th of *Dhu al-Hijjah* (the Hajj month, or 12th month of the Muslim lunar calendar). There is no Hajj without the rituals of the Umra either preceding it or following it, but the rituals of the Umra can be performed without the Hajj.

The Ka’bah, and a large area surrounding it, is marked by pillars and is considered *haram*, or hallowed ground. No one but the Muslim may enter the

³ *ibid.*, p. 236.

hallowed ground.⁴ There is a boundary around Mecca that a prospective pilgrim cannot cross without first performing the ritual of donning the *Ihram* and saying the *Talbiyah*, this boundary is known as the *miqat*. The *Ihram* is the distinctive clothing worn by male pilgrims. It consists of two pieces of plain white seamless cloth, one is wrapped around the lower part of the body and the other is draped over the shoulders. For women, their ordinary daily clothing can be worn (white is the usual color). Women go without the veil and both men and women wear sandals leaving the tops of the feet bare. The *Ihram* is a symbol of purity and of the renunciation of the worldly and mundane. The *Talbiyah* is a prayer in which the pilgrim recites the following words in Arabic: “Here I am at Thy service O Lord, here I am. Here I am at Thy service and Thou hast no partners. Thine alone is All Praise and All Bounty, and Thine alone is The Sovereignty. Thou hast no partners.”⁵

For the Umra, the pilgrim arrives and stops at the *miqat*. Before he proceeds he must don the *Ihram* and say the *Talbiyah* and from then on the pilgrim abstains from the following: hunting, any kind of sexual activity, the use of any perfumes, quarrelling, killing any animal (to include swatting bugs), cutting or removing hair from any part of the body, men covering the head, covering the top of the feet, and lying and swearing. In explaining the reasons behind the prohibition on hunting animals and swatting bugs, one author states: “The restriction on hunting is said to emphasize that the hajj is a time of peace and harmony with all of God’s creation.”⁶

⁴ It is interesting to note that in the early 1800s two European adventurers disguised as Muslims visited Mecca during the hajj. The first was the Swiss adventurer Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, who visited Mecca in 1815 – the second was Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton, in 1853. Burton wrote a book about his adventure entitled, *The Pilgrimage*.

⁵ Quoted from *Glossary of Hajj Related Terms* found at <http://www.ummah.net/hajj/glossary/index.html>

⁶ Thomas W. Lippman, *Understanding Islam: An Introduction to the Muslim World*, (Meridian, Penguin Books, New York, 1995), p. 25.

The Umra has three essential rituals, the *tawaf* (circling the Ka'bah seven times), the *sa'i* (walking between the hills of *Al-Marwa* and *Al-Safa* seven times), and *taqseer* (shaving or clipping the whole head of hair for the male pilgrim, cutting a symbolic lock of hair for the female). The Muslim conducting the full Hajj must also perform these rituals.

The *tawaf* celebrates the construction of the Ka'bah by Abraham and Ishmael, and the ritual of *sa'i* celebrates the legend of Hagar's trying to find water for her baby son, Ishmael, and the Angel Gabriel giving them water to drink by creating the well of Zamzam.

As the story goes, Abraham, upon God's command, had left Hagar and Ishmael alone in the desert. Both Hagar and Ishmael soon became thirsty, and Hagar, not being able to endure the cries of her infant son, began to run frantically in search of water between the hills of Al-Marwa and Al-Safa. God pitied her and sent Gabriel who touched his wing to earth and where his wing touched, up gushed water, creating the well of Zamzam. Another account has it that the water sprang forth at the spot where the infant Ishmael's feet touched the ground.

The greater pilgrimage, or Hajj takes place between the 8th and 13th days of *Dhu al-Hijjah*, with the pilgrim conducting the same rituals as those in the lesser Hajj or Umra. The pilgrim will conduct the *tawaf al-qudoom*, or the initial tawaf, which consists of circumambulating the Ka'bah counterclockwise seven times, stopping at *Maqam Ibrahim* or the station of Abraham (the sacred stone upon which Abraham supposedly stood to finish the top levels of the Ka'bah), pausing to kiss or touch the sacred Blackstone (possibly a meteorite; the stone given to Abraham by God as a corner stone for the Ka'bah), and finally taking a drink from the well of Zamzam. After these rites are completed, the pilgrim leaves

Mecca and heads toward Mina. On the first day of the Hajj, the pilgrims encamp at Mina and spend their time in meditation and prayer.

On the 9th of *Dhu al-Hijjah* (the second day of the Hajj), the pilgrims depart Mina for the plain of Arafat. It is on the plain of Arafat that the pilgrims conduct the ritual of the *wuquf*, or the “standing before Allah.” The *wuquf* is conducted near the Mount of Mercy where the Prophet Muhammad is said to have delivered his farewell sermon, commanding all Muslims to accept each other as brothers. The pilgrim stands erect on the plain and recites ritual prayers under the guidance of an imam – the pilgrim will pray from noon until sundown. Depending on the time of year (the Muslim calendar is based on a Lunar year and the Hajj can take place in the winter or summer months) the pilgrims can be standing for hours in their simple *Ihram*, without head cover, under a scorching sun. Yet for the faithful it is one of the culminating moments of their religious lives. At sunset the pilgrims depart the plain of Arafat and proceed to the plain of Muzdalifah, which is situated about halfway between Mina and Arafat. Here they pray and collect small pebbles for use in the next day’s ritual.

Before sunrise on the third day, the pilgrims proceed to Mina, for the ritual tossing pebbles at Satan. The source of this ritual is the Prophet Abraham, who, while offering his son Ishmael to God as a sacrifice, was approached by Satan in disguise. The disguised Satan tried to convince Abraham to disregard God’s command to sacrifice Ishmael, but Abraham threw stones at Satan to drive him away. It is here at Muzdalifah on the 10th of *Dhu al-Hijjah* that the pilgrims throw seven pebbles at a stone pillar representing Satan. The ceremony ends with the sacrifice of a goat or a sheep – the pilgrim eats part of the animal, and the remainder is given away to the poor.

The sacrifice on the 10th of *Dhu al-Hijjah* is celebrated by Muslims all over the world as the *Id al-Adha*, or feast of the sacrifice (sometimes known as the great

feast). On this day the head of each Muslim family sacrifices an animal in the same manner as done at Muzdalifah.

At the end of the sacrifice ritual the pilgrim has his hair cut or his head shaven and his nails are cut, and the cut hair and nails are buried at Mina. The pilgrim then proceeds again to the Ka'bah and performs the *tawaf al-ifadah*, the final circling of the Ka'bah seven times, stopping at the station of Abraham, pausing to kiss or touch the Blackstone, and drinking from the well of Zamzam. The *Sa'i*, the ritual of running between Al-Safa and Al-Marwa, follows the *tawaf al-ifadah*. It is at this point that the pilgrim has fulfilled the requirements of the Hajj, and is now entitled to be called *Hajji*. The pilgrim is now deconsecrated and can return to regular attire as well as resume normal activities, including marital relations.

The pilgrims again return to Mina, and on the 11th and 12th of *Dhu al-Hijjah* they stone the pillars of Satan, throwing the remaining pebbles gathered on the plain of Muzdalifah – seven at time at each of three pillars.

Although not part of the Hajj, most pilgrims continue their journey and stop at Medina to visit the mosque and tomb of the Prophet, the second holiest site in Islam.

For the hundreds of thousands of Muslims who have traveled to Mecca, from the four corners of the earth, the Hajj is an unforgettable memory, a once-in-a-lifetime experience, the crowning moment of their religious lives. Muslims from London, New York, Paris, Berlin, Baghdad, Damascus, Jakarta, Islamabad, Tehran, Cairo, Manila, and Tashkent, all come together in a grand unifying experience. Rich or poor, doctor or camel driver, professor or merchant, all wear the simple and humble *Ihram*, all complete the same rituals, and all, as the devout Muslim would say – all are the same in the eyes of Allah.

Chapter 12

WOMEN IN ISLAMIC SOCIETY

The position of women in Islamic society is somewhat less than men. In fact, an argument could be made that much of Islam is a male dominated, prejudiced society. The Qur'an in *Surah* (Chapter) Four, Verse 34 states:

“Men have authority over women because God has made the one superior to the other, and because they spend their wealth to maintain them. Good women are obedient. They guard their unseen parts because God has guarded them. As for those from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them and send them to beds apart and beat them. Then if they obey you, take no further action against them. God is high, supreme.”¹

The inferior treatment of women begins even before birth. Raphael Patai, a renowned Middle East scholar notes:

“The overwhelming desire of all parents is to have sons, and on the very wedding day (or wedding week) the friends and relatives of the young couple wish them many sons. Once the wife becomes pregnant, she hopes and prays that she will be graced with a boy. If indeed a boy is born, he is greeted with exuberant joy. If a girl – the mother is ashamed and the father's face darkens with displeasure.”²

In his book *The Arab Mind*, Patai discusses the difference in child rearing practices of boys and girls. Boys are breast fed twice as long as girls – boys are pampered, girls, generally, are not. The pampered, preferential treatment to males,

¹ *The Koran*, translated with notes by N.J. Dawood, (Penguin Books, London, England, 5th Edition with revisions, 1993), p. 64.

² Raphael Patai, *The Arab Mind*, (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1983), p. 28.

leads, according to Patai, to the Arab man's attitude towards women: "that the destiny of women in general, and in particular of those within the family circle, is to serve the men and obey them."³

Patai writes about the Arab Muslim, but the treatment of women is much the same throughout Islam. The Qur'an has many verses that highlight the inequity between men and women. Surah 2:223 reads: "Women are your fields: go, then, into your fields whence you please." ⁴Surah 2:228 states: "Women shall with justice have rights similar to those exercised against them, although men have a status above women."⁵ Surah 4:11: "A male shall inherit twice as much as a female."⁶

A man can marry up to four women (Qur'an 4:3), although the Qur'an also says that if a man cannot treat all wives equally, it is preferable to marry only one. In witnessing contract disputes the Qur'an (2:282) requires the testimony of two women to equal that of one man.

Many in Islam will say that women do have equality of treatment – they will say that women are respected and held in high regard, and that in Islam women are protected. Indeed, in Arab culture, women are provided a great deal of protection by the male relatives of their families, but this protection does not equate with equality – and the many cases of "honor killings" in the Middle East tends to diminish this argument.

Sayyid Qutb, a man who has been called one of the most influential ideologues in Islamic fundamentalism, wrote in his book *Social Justice in Islam*:

³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴ *The Koran*, Dawood, *Op.Cit.*, p. 33.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

“Islam has guaranteed women a complete equality with men with regard to their sex; it has permitted no discrimination except in some incidental matters connected with physical capacity, with customary procedure, or with responsibility, in all of which the human status of the two sexes is not in question. Wherever the physical endowments, the customs, and responsibilities are identical, the sexes are equal; and wherever there is some difference in these respects, the discrimination follows that difference.”⁷

Qutb is saying that women are equal, “except” – except in matters of physical capacity, customary procedure or with responsibility. Huh? Nonsense! Qutb’s very words decry equality. What does he mean by customary procedure – tribal customs like “honor killing,” or female circumcision (female genital mutilation)? And responsibility – are women allowed to choose those situations of responsibility? Qutb goes on and criticizes the freedoms the “materialistic West” grants to women:

“It is well to remember that the West brought women out of the home to work only because their men-folk shrank from the responsibility of keeping them and caring for them although the price was the chastity and honor of woman.”⁸

To be fair there are Islamic countries that have come a long way in according better status to women. Turkey was the first Islamic country to separate religion and state and women there enjoy much broader rights and privileges than do women in other Islamic countries. There is a movement in many Islamic countries to advance the rights of women. There is perhaps even a feminist movement, but one Islamic scholar questions the energy of any such movement by his statement: “If ever there was an oxymoron in this world, it must surely be

⁷ Sayyid Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, translated by John B. Hardie, translation revised by Hamid Algar, (Islamic Publications International, New York, revised edition 2000, first published in 1953) p. 73.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

“Islamic feminism” ...”⁹ There are countries, however, that lag considerably behind.

Saudi Arabia is one such country. In Saudi Arabia there is even a strict segregation between the sexes – e.g., there are separate sections of restaurants for women, separate universities, etc. Apart from the segregation, which is discriminatory in and of itself, there are discriminatory laws as well. Women are denied the right to drive automobiles, women by law must wear the *hijab* (veil) and *abayah* (full covered robe), etc.

The eminent Middle East scholar, Bernard Lewis has recently pointed to one big factor keeping Middle Eastern, and Islamic society in general, from catching up and achieving parallels with Western society and culture:

“Another approach has been to view the main culprit as the relegation of women to an inferior position in Muslim society, which deprives the Islamic world of the talents and energies of half its people and entrusts the other half’s crucial early years of upbringing to illiterate and downtrodden mothers. The products of such an education, it has been said, are likely to grow up either arrogant or submissive, and unfit for a free, open society.”¹⁰

If Islam wants to advance and attain anything like the cultural, educational, economic, and scientific accomplishments that Western civilization has achieved, then it must accord women equal status and treatment with men.

I will close out this essay with an aphorism recorded by Al-Ghazali in the 11th century, and a short tale, written in 14th century Egypt, by Al-Nuwayri.

⁹ R. Stephen Humphreys, *Between Memory and Desire: The Middle East in a Troubled Age* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001) p. 223.

¹⁰ Bernard Lewis, “What Went Wrong?” *The Atlantic Monthly*, January 2002, p. 45.

The aphorism: “A teacher was teaching girls how to write. A sage passed by and said, ‘This teacher is teaching wickedness to the wicked.’ ”¹¹

The short tale: “Ash’ab heard Hubba the woman of Medina say, ‘O please God, do not let me die until you have forgiven me for my sins!’ Ash’ab said to her: ‘Wicked woman! You are not asking God for forgiveness, you are asking Him for immortality.’ ”¹²

¹¹ Quoted in: Bernard Lewis, *A Middle East Mosaic: Fragments of Life, Letters and History*, (Modern Library Paperback Edition, New York, 2001) p. 187.

¹² Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 188.

Chapter 13

IN THE NAME OF HONOR

Honor Killings in the Middle East

The Arab Middle East is unmistakably a male dominated, chauvinistic society. Women are definitely not equal in the Arab world. Recent television images of the cruel treatment of Afghani women by the Taliban – images of women attired in the head-to-toe, hot scratchy *burqas*, being beaten by Taliban men with heavy sticks, testify to just one act of inhumane treatment – but in a larger sense demonstrates the degree of male subjugation of women throughout Middle Eastern Arab society. The most egregious act, condoned by the Arab male dominated society, is honor killing, the act of killing a female family member to cleanse a family's honor. In a surprising number of Arab countries, women and girls who violate sexual rules or other social norms are often murdered or maimed to satisfy family honor.

Part of my duties as a U.N. Liaison Officer in Amman, Jordan in 1994, was to read the local newspapers and file a report on a survey of the week's news with headquarters in Jerusalem. Almost weekly I would come across a story in the *Jordanian Times* of an "honor killing." One case I remember vividly. It involved a 13 year-old mentally retarded girl who was raped by her cousin. She became pregnant and was placed in Amman's Women's Prison as a protective measure. After the baby was born, she was released to her family. The evening she came home, her brother stabbed her many times and slashed her throat. He then ran through his village with the bloodied knife raised high in a measure of pride, crying out over and over that he had avenged his family's honor. The men of the

village shouted praise to the young man and fired weapons into the air in typical Arab celebration. The women gathered in large groups ululating in tribute to the cleansing deed. The police arrested the young man, he was tried, convicted and sentenced – sentence: three months in prison.

Article 340 of Jordan's penal code states: "A husband or a close relative who kills a woman caught in a situation highly suspicious of adultery will be totally exempt from sentence."¹ According to the article, judges should consider sentence reduction in any case involving the female family members involvement in pre-marital or extra-marital sex, even if it is against her will.²

In October of 1999, the *Washington Post* reported: "A 16-year-old mentally retarded girl was shot to death in March on orders of a tribal council and in front of a tribal gathering in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. Her crime? She brought dishonor to her tribe by being raped. Several weeks later, a 29-year-old mother of two sons, Samia Sarwar, was shot to death in Lahore. She apparently was killed because she was attempting to divorce an abusive husband."³ Rarely are honor killings prosecuted in Pakistan, and if they are, the sentences are lenient much as in Jordan. Although Pakistan is not an Arab country, it is an Islamic country and probably the biggest offender in terms of honor killings.

Not only are women killed over perceived honor crimes, but often mutilated as well. One journalist describes a case: "Perveen's eyes are empty sockets of

¹ Quoted in: Julian Borger, "Women are Killed for Family Honor," *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 6 November, 1997, p. A11.

² See also: Ilene R. Prusher, "One Woman Tackles 'Honor' Crimes in Jordan," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 10 August 2000.

³ Judy Mann, "A Matter of Honor vs. Justice," *The Washington Post*, 6 October 1999, p. C16.

unseeing flesh, her earlobes have been sliced off, and her nose is a gaping, reddened stump of bone. Sixteen months ago, her husband, in a fit of rage over her alleged affair with a brother-in-law, bound her hands and feet and slashed her with a razor and knife. She was three months' pregnant at the time.”⁴

Bouthaina Shaaban, a Professor of English at Damascus University, in her book, *Both Right and Left Handed: Arab Women Talk About Their Lives*, describes the contempt and disgust even shown the corpse of a perpetrator of an “honor crime,” in this case a young friend of Bouthaina's who had gotten pregnant out of wedlock and was killed by her brother. “Burial ceremonies are usually not allowed for the victims of such ‘crimes of honour.’ ” She goes on and describes children dragging the body to a graveyard at the far end of the Syrian village: “Children were pulling her by the hair, throwing big stones at her misshapen, pregnant abdomen and spitting at her. On our way home from school we saw the naked body still lying in the graveyard like a dead sheep.”⁵

A 1998 US State Department report on human rights found that there were more than 20 reported honor killings in Jordan that year, and the report added that the number is actually four times as high.⁶ A 1999 Amnesty International report has the number of reported cases of honor killings in Pakistan in 1998 as 300, the report cites data of 286 women victims of honor killings in the state of Punjab, and 255 women were murdered in Sindh in 1998.⁷

In Jordan, there have been efforts to abolish Article 340, but the proposal has failed each time it has been presented to Jordan's parliament. There are many

⁴ Pamela Constable, “In Pakistan, Women Pay The Price of ‘Honor’,” *The Washington Post*, 8 May 2000, p. A1.

⁵ Bouthaina Shaaban, *Both Right and Left Handed: Arab Women Talk About Their Lives*, (Indiana University Press, 1991) pp. 4-5.

⁶ Judy Mann, “A Desperate Woman is Denied Asylum,” *The Washington Post*, 2 February 2000, p. C15.

⁷ Judy Mann, “A Matter of Honor vs. Justice,” *The Washington Post*, 6 October 1999, p. C16.

who struggle with initiatives to eradicate this terrible practice, but: “Each initiative is a battle against centuries-old customs, mores, and family practices. In many cases, changes are pushed by the wealthy and educated elite, rather than from a grass-roots effort. And inevitably, changes in gender roles and rights are branded as “un-Islamic” or simply mimicking Western values.”⁸

Nothing in the Qur’an or the Hadith condones, permits, or authorizes this sort of brutal retaliation. The Qur’an speaks of 100 lashes to both the adulterer and adulteress (Surah 24:2), and generally condemns pre-marital and extra-marital sex and promises dire punishments in hell for such acts, but there is nothing in the Qur’an that sanctions “honor killings.” The Qur’an does, however, relegate women to a much lower status than men, and that sets the general trend for the treatment of women.

Religious teachings, tribal beliefs and mores combine in many Arab and other Islamic countries and set in motion the unspeakably horrible practice of justifying murder in the name of honor. Can anyone wonder why Western society would clash with such ghastly behavior? To my way of thinking, honor killing is another hurdle that Islam must overcome in any attempt at a promising reformation.

⁸ Ilene R. Prusher, “Small steps, but the pace quickens,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 7 August 2000.

Chapter 14

A BRUTAL AND PAINFUL RITUAL

Female Circumcision

Female circumcision or female genital mutilation is a widespread practice in Egypt and other countries of the African continent. Raphael Patai, in his book *The Arab Mind* (published in 1973 and revised in 1983) wrote that the procedure was still practiced by the Bedouins of Jordan, in Mecca, in parts of Oman, by the southern tribes in Iraq near Basra, in Egypt, Sudan, and parts of the Sahara.¹ In my research of available primary sources, I could not find anything indicating that the practice continues outside the African continent, but it is still a common practice in many African countries.

The act of female circumcision runs from simply removing the tip of the clitoris, to removing the entire clitoris and removal of the adjacent labia (this is the form most often practiced in Egypt), to the most extreme form called infibulation, which “consists of the removal of the clitoris, the adjacent labia (majora and minora), and the joining of the scraped sides of the vulva across the vagina, where they are secured with thorns or sewn with catgut or thread. A small opening is kept to allow passage of urine and menstrual blood.”² An infibulated woman must be cut open to allow intercourse on the wedding night and is often closed again afterwards to secure fidelity to the husband.

¹ Raphael Patai, *The Arab Mind*, (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1983), p. 123.

² See: <http://hamp.hampshire.edu/~mnbf94/whatis.FGM.html>

Those who practice this procedure believe that female circumcision insures chastity, preserves the female's virginity by inhibiting sexual desire and makes the girl more marriageable. It is very much a part of family honor, which is a cherished concept in Islamic society. The practice, however, is not exclusive to Islam. According to academics, female circumcision predates both Christianity and Islam, going as far back as pharaonic times. The more extreme version of female genital mutilation, infibulation, is also known as pharaonic circumcision.

As recently as 1996 in an Egyptian national survey over "97 percent of married Egyptian women between the ages of 15 and 49 had undergone the procedure."³ *The Christian Science Monitor* in February 2001 reported that in 1997 "...8 out of 10 adult Egyptian women approved of the practice, a new US and Egypt-funded survey shows roughly 7 out of 10 women support it."⁴ This is obviously an improvement in numbers, but there is still a long way to go.

Untrained midwives, village barbers, and sometimes the local doctor typically perform the procedure in rural villages along the Nile. Female circumcision entails fatal health risks from bleeding and infection, and women who have suffered through the process often experience problems in later life with sexual relations and childbirth. *The Washington Post* reported the death of a 4-year-old from complications with anesthesia involved in the removal of her genitals. The family accepted it as the will of God, and wondered why the doctor, who they felt was a good doctor, had done anything wrong. Another 4-year-old "...suffered the same fate at the hands of the same doctor on the same day."⁵

³ Reported in: John Lancaster, "Egyptians Stand by Female Circumcision: Tradition Flouts Foreign Pressures to Eliminate the Risky Practice," *The Washington Post*, 24 November 1996, p. A33.

⁴ Philip Smucker, "Egypt's battle against female circumcision," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 27 February 2001.

⁵ John Lancaster, "Egyptians Stand by Female Circumcision: Tradition Flouts Foreign Pressures to Eliminate the Risky Practice," *The Washington Post*, 24 November 1996, p. A33.

The world was jolted and international conscience pricked in 1994, when CNN aired a graphic broadcast from Egypt (during the U.N. conference on population and development in Cairo), in which a hysterical young girl is held down and mutilated by a Cairo barber. Embarrassed by the revelations, the government of Egypt began to take actions to remedy the problem.

Shortly after the CNN broadcast, Egypt began a process to ban the practice, by proposing the prohibition on performing the procedure in any government medical facility. The government immediately became embroiled in debate with Islamic clerics who encouraged the procedure as a Muslim rite.⁶ In July of 1996, Egypt imposed a government ban prohibiting doctors from performing the procedure in state hospitals. In December of 1998, Egyptian courts ruled in favor of the ban and immediately encountered hostility from clerics. The *Chicago Tribune* wrote in March, 1999 that: "Critics called the ban an insult to their Islamic faith," and reported Egyptian villager comments: "God forbid! This ruling won't work here. It won't be obeyed," and "It's an evil ruling," as well as defiant remarks like: "It will continue in secret. They are not going to check if my daughter has been circumcised or not."⁷

Inroads have been made, but the practice still continues – female circumcision is still prevalent in Egypt and other parts of Africa. The intransigence of many Egyptians, especially the more radical Islamic clerics, demonstrates the measures that Islam will take to protect female virtue and family honor. This concept of chastity and family honor are deeply imbedded in Islamic society. Witness the

⁶ See: Sarah Gauch, "In Egypt, Movement to Ban Ancient Practice Expands," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 19 December 1996.

⁷ Scheherezade Faramarzi, "It Won't Be Obeyed: Egypt Has an Uphill Battle to End Female Circumcision," *The Chicago Tribune*, 7 March 1999.

many “honor killings” in the Middle East and Pakistan to avenge and protect family honor.

It will take more than Western governments condemning the brutal and painful practice of female circumcision. It will take more than the score or so of critical Western “op-ed” pieces – it will take a comprehensive process of education – education conducted by Egyptians themselves at the grass roots level. In a June 1998 article, John Lancaster of *The Washington Post* pointed out: “One key lesson is that the top-down approach favored by the Egyptian government – trying to eliminate the practice by fiat – is largely an exercise in futility.” An Egyptian quoted in the article said: “These things don’t change overnight, and they don’t change by force.”⁸

It will take educating women and religious leaders on the health hazards and humiliations of female circumcision. Egypt’s Copts (an Egyptian Christian sect who also practice female circumcision) have started a grass roots process of addressing the problems of literacy, raising the living standards, family planning and health education – all this is accomplished by dedicated team members who first ask permission of the village elders, and then typically live in the village themselves – often for as many as seven years. They are having some success. It will take a determination and dedication of this level if this cruel practice is to be eradicated.

⁸ John Lancaster, “Village Gives Up a Painful Ritual: Drive to End Female Circumcision Gains Support Among Egypt’s Copts,” *The Washington Post*, 21 June 1998, p. A19.

In the broader context, it will take, “enhancing women’s status in society,” and improving their “access to education.”⁹ Enhancing women’s status in society, is the key component to any change – and change is definitely needed.

⁹ John Lancaster, “Village Gives Up a Painful Ritual: Drive to End Female Circumcision Gains Support Among Egypt’s Copts,” *The Washington Post*, 21 June 1998, p. A19.

OVERCOMING THE INSHALLAH COMPLEX

One of the most frustrating things that a westerner finds in the Middle East is what I call the *Inshallah* Complex. *Inshallah* is Arabic for “if God wills, or God willing.” From my time in the Middle East, I learned that *inshallah* is more than a word, it is a concept – and that concept is “pre-destiny.”

Muslims believe in pre-destiny – *Allah* has pre-ordained and pre-determined all that takes place or will take place. The Qur’an in *Surah* (Chapter) 57:22, states: “Every misfortune that befalls the earth, or your own persons, is ordained before We bring it into being.”¹ To many Muslims everything that takes place, everything that happens, is the will of *Allah*, and to try and change what *Allah* has willed only makes things worse – hence the oft-repeated saying “*inshallah* (God willing).” In *Surah* 18 verses 23 and 24 of the Qur’an we find the remonstrance: “Do not say of anything: ‘I will do it tomorrow,’ without adding: ‘If God wills.’”² This reminds the Muslim that there will only be a tomorrow if God wills it.

Many times I have remarked to an Arab, “I will see you tomorrow,” to which they would always reply, *inshallah*, if God wills. This would always put me ill at ease, since from my viewpoint I had the positive faith that I “would” see them tomorrow. However, Arabs never assume the next day. To my mind this was a scary, negative viewpoint – but looking at Arabs from my viewpoint is “mirror-imaging.”

¹ *The Koran*, translated with notes by N.J. Dawood, (Penguin Books, London, England, 5th Edition with revisions, 1993), p. 383.

² *Ibid.*, p. 207.

Accidents and misfortunes of all sorts are the will of *Allah*. I had an instructor pilot (who once trained prospective Saudi pilots) tell me that once during a training flight, the aircraft a student pilot was flying went into a tailspin, and then into a dive. The instructor pilot screamed, “Pull up!” but the Saudi only replied, that it was the will *Allah* that the plane was in a nose-dive (fortunately the instructor pilot took control of the aircraft). This is obviously carrying the concept of *inshallah* to an extreme, but I have personally encountered the same fatalistic thought process.

I was standing on a busy street corner in Ismailia, Egypt and watched an Arab youth step off the curb into oncoming traffic without looking. He missed being hit by inches – as it was he was brushed to the ground. I rushed to the young man and helped pick him up. I asked him, “Didn’t you see the car? Why did you step right in front of it?” His reply: “If it was *Allah’s* will for me to be hit by the car, I would have been hit by the car.”

Since everything that happens, has happened, or will happen, is the will of *Allah* – this leads to a sometimes-fatalistic worldview. The decline of Islam and the Arab empire from its pinnacle in the 700s and 800s was the will of *Allah*. The loss of Palestine to the Jews was the will of *Allah*. All the humiliations of the Arab-Israeli wars were the will of *Allah*.

Raphael Patai, a noted Middle East scholar, has captured this fatalism:

“Only among the Arabs could a belief emerge that their religion, Islam, helped them in the glorious centuries of their past to achieve a cultural and military superiority over the West. Therefore, only the Arabs have to face the bitter reality that in recent centuries they have lost both these superiorities. Given the Arabs belief in divine predestination, this reversal of pre-eminence cannot but be considered by them a preordained event which, in turn, casts doubt on their value in their own eyes. Since for the traditional Muslim it is inconceivable to reproach or even question God, the blame for the Arab reversal is put on the Arabs themselves, primarily in terms of moral, that is,

religious shortcomings. Or, in an illogical but much more satisfactory manner, the West itself is held culpable for all that befell the Arabs.”³

So we see that, to the Arab, failure or success – all that happens is the will of *Allah*. For success the Arab (and I mean Arab in the collective sense here) rejoices, but for failure, they see it that somehow they, themselves have failed, since what has happened is obviously the will of *Allah* – and that failure is seen by them as a “religious shortcoming.” For the individual Arab, the concept of *inshallah*, allows them to deny direct responsibility for failure – they will say, “It was the will of *Allah*, of which I have no control.” When Arabs, both collectively and individually, cannot stand the self-recriminations any longer, they turn to a convenient scapegoat, the West.

Pre-destiny has played a large role in helping extremist sects like the Wahabis gain converts. Sayyid Qutb an Egyptian extremist (hanged by President Nasser for his extremist views in 1966) regarded as the father of modern fundamentalism, believed that if the Arabs would only regain their disciplined faith they would, as did the early Muslims, become a great empire. It is because of straying from the pure disciplined path that calamity has befallen Islam. Why else could it be? The defeats and setbacks were the will of God, and God’s will cannot be questioned, therefore it must be because Muslims have religious shortcomings – Muslims have fallen away from the true purity of Islam. This thought process provides fuel for fundamentalists and extremists who want Arabs to return to the “true Islam” of the 700-800s.

³ Raphael Patai, *The Arab Mind*, (Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, 1983), p. 299.

The “*inshallah* complex” is self-defeating, and is just another hurdle that Arab Muslims must overcome. It is my hope that this hurdle is someday cleared and Islam becomes the active, positive religion that it can be.

PARALLELS FROM THE PAST

There are many who claim that the current crisis involves a clash of civilizations, a clash between the West (Christianity) and Islam. My point in this essay is that the current mindset of Al Qa'ida, and for that matter many radical Islamic terrorist organizations, has striking parallels to the mindset of Christian Crusaders during the Crusades.

Christianity predates Islam by a little over 600 years, and has gone through dramatic changes since the time of Christ. During the time of the Crusades, Christianity was very much a part of every day life. The Church had an immutable impact on every aspect of life. The typical village day revolved around the daily sequence of prayer and the Church. Every holiday or festival was related to the Church or a Saint. Birth, marriage, death, plantings and harvestings – the Church was indelibly woven into the very fabric of life.

To the Crusader, the march to retake the Holy Land from the infidel was more than a Crusade, more than a Holy War, it was a holy, dutiful Pilgrimage. In the basements and lower levels of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, etched into the ancient stone, are hundreds of small crosses, carved by the hands of avenging Crusaders. It was a tribute to God, the fulfillment of a life's yearning, the culmination of a drive and duty that was imprinted on every Christian mind from birth.

Today the Church has less of an impact on secular events. There is a distinct separation of Church and State. There is, however, no separation of Church and

State in Islam. In a way, Islam today, is much like the Christian Church in 1099 – the very tenor of a Muslim’s life is ineradicably entwined with Islam and the Qur’an. To compare today’s Islamic zealot and the Christian Crusader of the Eleventh Century, let’s view an example of a Crusader mindset in 1099.

In 1099 a Crusader army sacked Jerusalem, and according to contemporary accounts (both Christian and Muslim), every man, woman, and child, both of Islamic and Jewish faith, were slaughtered. The eyewitness account of Raymund of Aguiles tells of the massacre:

“Wonderful sights were to be seen. Some of our men (and this was more merciful) cut off the heads of their enemies; others shot them with arrows, so that they fell from the towers; others tortured them longer by casting them into the flames. Piles of heads, hands and feet were to be seen in the streets of the city. It was necessary to pick one’s way over the bodies of men and horses. But these were small matters compared to what happened at the Temple of Solomon, a place where religious services are normally chanted. What happened there? If I tell the truth it will exceed your powers of belief. So let it suffice to say this much, at least, that in the Temple and porch of Solomon, men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins. Indeed it was a just and splendid judgment of God that this place should be filled with the blood of unbelievers since it had suffered so long from their blasphemies.”¹

This type of religious zeal is definitely the same type of intense fervor that we see in today’s Islamic radical. One can easily see Usama bin Ladin claiming (indeed he has claimed) that “it was a just and splendid judgment of Allah,” for 9/11. The same mindset of the Crusader of 1099 applies to the Islamic zealot of today. One can only hope that as time goes on, Islam will evolve just as

¹ Quoted in: Karen Armstrong, *Holy War: The Crusades and Their Impact on Today’s World*, (Anchor Books, New York, 2001), pp. 178-179.

Christianity – and that it will adapt the same zeal in demonstrating that it can be a religion of peace.

TOWARD AN ISLAMIC REFORMATION?

The January 3rd, 2002, edition of the *Washington Post* carried an op-ed piece entitled “My Islam.”¹ The article, written by a former Egyptian journalist, advocates a collective “soul-searching,” “a healthy dose of introspection” into Islam – all leading to an Islamic Reformation.

For a bit of historical perspective, let us return for a moment to the World of 1099. Life in Christendom at this time revolved around the Church, much as it does in Islam today. And that Church-centered (meaning that the Church dictated the normal course of life and how it was to be conducted) view led to the Crusades and all the atrocities committed in the name of God – against both Muslim and Jew. It is just that sort of extreme religious zeal that we witness today in groups such as Al Qa’ida.

Christianity changed, it evolved, and that evolution was due in part to the Protestant Reformation. Prior to the protestant reformation, Christianity was in turmoil. There were numerous schisms in the Church, and continual conflict over doctrine and philosophy. At one time there were two Popes (and for a short period three), one in Rome and one in Avignon, France. Each Pope claimed to be the legitimate Pope, and excommunicated the other Pope and all his followers. The old saying “damned if you do, and damned if you don’t,” comes from this time – essentially because the poor peasant did not know who to turn too. Who was the real Pope? If you believed in one, you were damned by the other. Who

¹ Mona Eltahawy, “My Islam,” *The Washington Post*, 3 January 2002, p. A17.

was to say that you had picked the right one? You could have just as easily picked the wrong one and damned yourself for eternity.

Wars of religion were a common occurrence in Europe, partly because of this and the corruption that existed in the Church, a change began in how some people viewed the Church. Martin Luther's 95 theses nailed to the door of the Church at Wittenberg in 1517 protested the many "indulgences" that existed in the Church at the time. The "indulgences" essentially were methods whereby you could pay for your sin. If you gave money to the Church you could be granted an indulgence, and your sin would be wiped-out.

The Protestant Reformation was the culmination of years of turmoil in the Church, and it helped establish a separation between Church and State. There is no real separation between Islam and the State.

Today, Islam is facing much the same degree of turmoil that caused Christian introspection and led to the Reformation. Islam is facing challenges of extremism and terrorist dogma that threaten to shake the very foundations of Islam. That threat essentially comes from the clash of civilizations, a clash driven by radical Islam's total refusal to accept any part of the religion, culture, and society of the West. The more radical extremists use terrorist methods and call for a *jihad* to eradicate the infidel, the more there will continue to be a clash of civilizations.

It is absolutely essential now for Islam to pause for deep reflection, to soul-search. Unfortunately, the biggest hurdle to any reformation is the Qur'an itself. As I stated in earlier articles, the Qur'an is the literal word of God – and since God is perfect, the word of God is perfect and cannot be changed.

At the time of Muhammad's reciting the Qur'an to his followers, the Qur'an was enlightenment. It forbade the common practice of killing girl babies. It gave women a right to inheritance, and more rights than they had ever had or hoped to have. It established principles of justice, equality and morality that just did not exist at the time. The Qur'an caused a monumental change in the Arab world of the time, and its precepts helped lead to the great Arab enlightenment, in art, architecture, mathematics, chemistry – all the arts, including the art of war.

But for many the Qur'an is stuck in time – embedded in the sixth century. There are Muslims who recognize this and use the Qur'an and its general philosophy as a guide to right living in a modern world. But there are many Muslims (in particular Wahabists) who want to return to the purity of Islam in the sixth century.

Eltahway's article is a start. As she points out: "Muslims in America are fortunate because we are free to debate without risking our lives... American Jewish friends have told me how their faith has evolved in America and given birth to the Reconstruction movement. Muslims in America have the chance to lead the way for the Umma."²

Perhaps Islam in America will lead the way to an enlightened Islamic Reformation. We can only hope so – because it may be the only way to avoid the inevitable clash of civilizations.

² *Ibid.*, *The Washington Post*

THE EVOLUTION OF ISLAMIC EXTREMISM

The Ideological Roots of Today's Islamic Terrorist

This essay will attempt to sketch the evolution of Islamic extremism. It will trace some of the ideological roots of today's terrorist. Islamic extremism has been called radicalism, fundamentalism and revivalism. Extremism suggests that the ideology is outside the norm, something not practiced by the majority, so to my mind this term applies, but radicalism could just as easily apply and revivalism is a great term of reference that defines what the radical ideologues are trying to do. Throughout the history of Islam there were groups and individuals who wanted to revive Islam to call for a "moral reconstruction of society."¹ The first such group were the Khariijites around 658 A.D.

Khariijites

The Khariijites (from an Arabic word meaning "to go out" or "exit") are the earliest known group to split away from mainstream Islam. The Khariijites became dissatisfied with the dissension generated by the maneuverings for the succession of the Caliphate. The Khariijites had originally been followers of Ali (the third Caliph) but turned against him because of theological differences (it was a Kharijite who assassinated Ali). The Khariijites believed that the claim to Muslim leadership should not follow along family lines (Ali was Muhammad's cousin and was married to Muhammad's daughter Fatima) or clan connections²,

¹ John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1998). P. 116.

² The *Shi'ah* sect of Islam took the exact opposite view, the Caliphate belonged by divine right to descendants of the Prophet.

but should be selected by the entire Muslim community (the *Umma*). Additionally the Kharijites believed and insisted that the word of God in the Qur'an was to be taken literally and not subject to interpretation. They believed that faith without commensurate deeds did not get the believer into heaven. It was deeds within the faith that gained entrance into paradise. The puritanical Kharijites, however, believed in true equality. Women were treated as absolute equals and many women went into battle on an equal footing with their male counterparts. To the Kharijites even a slave could become Caliph if chosen by the *Umma*.

Ibn Hanbal

The early Islamic jurist and theologian, Ahmed Ibn Hanbal (780-855) still has an enduring impact upon the Muslim community. It was Ibn Hanbal's disciples who founded the sunni Hanbali school of Islamic law or Shari'ah, which today is still one of the four primary sunni schools of law. As a young man he traveled far and wide throughout the Islamic realm, studying religion and collecting the *hadith* or traditions of the Prophet Muhammed. It was in the collection and study of the hadith that Ibn Hanbal became devoted to the traditional views of Islam and rejected innovation of any kind.

In his later years, Ibn Hanbal was imprisoned by the Caliphate for his refusal to accept the officially sanctioned theological dogma of the "creation of the Qur'an." The Caliphate followed the school of thought that believed that God "created" the Qur'an and transmitted it to the Prophet Muhammad. Ibn Hanbal believed in the traditionalist, opposing school of thought. He believed the Qur'an to be eternal, because God was eternal. He held that the Qur'an was the speech of God, and since it is the speech of God, it is part of God, and since God is eternal and not created, the Qur'an is eternal and not created. In developing his arguments against a "created Qur'an," Ibn Hanbal stressed the importance and dominance of the Qur'an and Sunnah as the body and soul of

Islam. With a change in Caliphs (who held to Ibn Hanbal's views) Ibn Hanbal was released from prison. He died in Baghdad in 855 AD.

Because of his steadfast faith and his tremendous scholarship, Ibn Hanbal enjoyed great popularity and was called the imam of Baghdad. His traditionalist beliefs in the Qur'an and Sunnah led him to target the dissenting groups of the Shi'ites and Kharijites.

Ibn Taymiyya

The next link in extremism's ideological chain is perhaps Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328). Ibn Taymiyya's teaching inspired the Wahhabi school of thought and heavily influenced Sayyid Qutb (who some call the father of modern Islamic revivalism).

Ibn Taymiyya was born in Harran, Syria in 1263 AD. He lived in a time of turmoil within Islam and the Islamic Empire. Crusaders still occupied parts of Palestine and Syria, the Mongols had sacked Baghdad in 1258, and the eastern Islamic Empire was all but destroyed. Sufis were spreading their unorthodox mystical beliefs, and the Mamelukes had ceased power in Egypt and were moving into Syria.

Ibn Taymiyya was a purist, he believed much as the Kharijites did in the literal word of God not being subject to interpretation. Islam had just passed through a time of trial with the Crusades and the Mongol incursions. Additionally, Muslim leadership was divided – there existed a Caliphate in Cairo, one in Damascus and one in Cordoba, Spain. Because of his strict conservative views and outspoken criticism to everything that was not explicitly sanctioned by the Qur'an, Ibn Taymiyya came into conflict with the Mameluke Sultanate of Egypt. When the Mamelukes found themselves at war with the Muslim Mongols of Iran, the

Mamelukes asked Ibn Taymiyya for a judgment sanctioning the holiness of their cause. Ibn Taymiyya obliged, he declared that although the Mongols had professed Islam, they did not follow the true and pure path of the Prophet and therefore were *jahiliyya*³ pagans. Ibn Taymiyya urged jihad against the Mongol infidels, he urged jihad against all infidels, *jahiliyya* Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

The Wahhabi Movement

The Wahhabi movement gets its name from Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792), who joined forces with Muhammad Ibn Saud⁴ to lead a militant reform movement to cleanse the Arabian Peninsula of impure practices. Al-Wahhab was influenced by the teachings of Ibn Taymiyya. The Wahhabists⁵ were traditionalists who attacked innovations such as Sufism as heresy. “They were puritans fired with the zeal to purify not only the religion of what they deemed infidelities but also corruption in manners and religious practices in Arabia, which they attributed to laxity in enforcing religious injunctions.”⁶ Al-Wahhab compared the Arabs of his time as little better than the Arabs of pre-Islamic Arabia of the *jahiliyya*. He justified the use of force (jihad) on all heretics who disagreed with his ideology and together with Ibn Saud warred on neighboring tribes, converting them or putting them to the sword. It is noteworthy that the early Wahhabi “missionary-warriors” referred to themselves as *Ikhwan* or Brotherhood.⁷

Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) and the *Salafiyya* Movement

³ *Jahiliyya* refers to the time of ignorance and barbarism before the Prophet Muhammad and Islam.

⁴ The ancestor of today’s Saudi Royal family.

⁵ Wahhabis referred to themselves as *Muwahiddun*: “those who advocate oneness” or unitarians.

⁶ Caesar E. Farah, *Islam*, (Barron’s Educational Series, Inc, Hauppauge, NY, 2000), p. 229.

⁷ Esposito, *Op. Cit.*, P. 119.

Muhammad Abduh is the founder of the *salafiyya* school of Islam. According to Carl Brown in *Religion and State: The Muslim Approach to Politics*, the best known school of Islamic modernism is the *salafiyya* school, based on the teachings of Shaykh Muhammad Abduh and as continued by his disciple Rashid Rida.⁸ The term *salafiyya* comes from an Arabic term meaning ancestors or pious forefathers. The *salafiyya* movement thus looked to their pious ancestors during the time of Muhammad for guidance. "...the Salafiyya movement argued that Muslims over the centuries had deviated from God's divine plan as transmitted to his chosen prophet, Muhammad, and as practiced by the early Muslim community. The solution they maintained, was to use the earlier golden age as the needed model... If everything Muslims need to know and need to do is to be found in the Qur'an, the Sunna, and the actions of the early Muslim community, then why concern oneself with borrowing from the West?"⁹ Abduh did, however, believe in some modernizing influence – he "...maintained that while those regulations of Islamic law that governed worship (*ibadat*, such as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage) were immutable, the vast majority of regulations concerned with social affairs (*muamalat*, such as penal, commercial, and family laws) were open to change."¹⁰ It was his disciple Rashid Rida who extended his ideologies to encompass all men's affairs, whether religious or social, there were no distinctions between the two – the Qur'an and Sunna applies to all actions.

Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966)

It is Sayyid Qutb who articulates the highest stage of Islamic revivalism – Islamic extremist ideology. It is Qutb who forges the final link on the radical evolutionary chain. Qutb, (along with Hasan al-Banna, and Sayyid Abu'l-A'la

⁸ Carl Brown, *Religion and State: The Muslim Approach to Politics*, (Columbia University Press, New York, 2000) p. 139.

⁹ Brown, *ibid.*, p. 140.

¹⁰ Esposito, *Op. Cit.*, p. 131.

Mawdudi) "...reinterpreted Islamic history and tradition to respond to the sociohistorical conditions of the twentieth century."¹¹ According to Qutb, al-Banna, and Mawdudi, "There were two historic options – ignorance and Islam – modern Muslim society was compared with that of pre-Islamic Arabia, a period of ignorance (*jahiliyya*), disunity, exploitation, and superstition. They felt that much of the Muslim world was gripped by factionalism, Sufi excesses, and acculturated, alien European institutions, practices contrary to Islam."¹²

In his book *Milestones*, Qutb states: "Nowadays, the entire world lives in a state of *jahiliyya* as far as the source from which it draws the rules of its mode of existence is concerned, a *jahiliyya* that is not changed one whit by material comfort and scientific inventions, no matter how remarkable...any society that is not Muslim is *jahiliyya*...we must get rid of the *jahiliyya* society, we must abandon its values and ideology, and must not enfeeble our own values and ideology by even one iota to bring the close to it! Certainly not! Our paths diverge, and if we took even a single step toward it, our ethics would vanish and we would be lost!"¹³

As one Muslim scholar points out: "Qutb argues strongly that the enemies of Islam – especially Jews, Christians, and Westerners in general – have shown a systematic antagonism toward Islam in that their goal is to mutilate and finally destroy the Islamic *aqidah*."¹⁴

¹¹ Esposito, *Op. Cit.*, p. 151.

¹² Esposito, *ibid.*, p. 152.

¹³ Quoted in: Giles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984), pp. 44, 47, 53.

¹⁴ Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi, *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World*, (State University of New York Press, Albany, 1996), p. 202. *aqidah* translates to a creed or statement of beliefs.

Qutb essentially argues for a *jihad* not only directed at Western civilization and its corruptions, but also directed against any Islamic leader and for that matter, any Muslim who does not accept the Islamic creed as Qutb sees it. Anyone who does not accept Islam as transmitted and practiced by the Prophet Muhammad in the “golden age” of Islam, is *jahiliyya* and any *jahiliyya* society must be eliminated.

Usama bin Ladin advocates the exact same philosophy. He sees America as *jahiliyya* – not only America, but the Saudi regime is *jahiliyya* as well, they have fallen away from the true pure Islam of the “golden age.” And *jahiliyya* societies must be eliminated

Chapter 19

MADRASSAS: UNIVERSITIES OF JIHAD

Madrassas have been around for hundreds of years – *madrassa* is simply an Arabic term for school. The reason madrassas have been cast into the glare of publicity of late is the rapid and uncontrolled proliferation of the schools and, more importantly, the radical extremist teachings that have infused in students an uninhibited hatred towards Western civilization and the United States.

The great majority of madrassas are not schools in the normal sense, but are religious schools, where students are steeped in the Qur'an and Sunna¹ of the Prophet Muhammad. There are tens of thousands of madrassas throughout the Muslim world, including some within the United States. But it is Pakistan that has seen the greatest explosive growth of these radical religious schools. Pakistan has been the hotbed for madrassas for some time. Today it is estimated that there are over 7,500 madrassas in Pakistan, with an estimated 750,000 to one million students, of which approximately 30,000 are foreign students (which include some Americans)².

Almost every school exclusively teaches the Qur'an and nothing else. A few schools teach subjects such as math and science, but only the bare essentials of these subjects are taught, and even then, minimal time is spent teaching them. Very little secular education is offered in madrassas, with primary instruction

¹ *Sunnah* is the virtuous example of the Prophet, the exemplary and righteous way he led his life.

² *The New York Times* reports the number of schools at 7,500 with 750,000-1 million students. See, Rick Bragg, "A Nation Challenged: Schools; Shaping Young Islamic Hearts and Hatreds," *The New York Times*, 14 October 2001, section 1A, p. 1. A *Washington Times* article lists the number of Madrassas at 15,000. See, Arnaud de Borchgrave, "Nourishing the Tensions," *The Washington Times*, 3 January 2002, p. A13.

being only the extreme radical brand of Islam that has its roots in the Deobandi sect of Pakistan, and the Wahabist sect of Saudi Arabia.

One reason for the rapid spread and the popularity of madrassas is economics. Pakistan is a poor country, with 40 percent of the population being below the poverty line, and a literacy rate of only 42.7 percent³. As one newspaper article states: "Almost all the students come from poor families who cannot afford any other education in a country that spends about 90 percent of its budget on debt service and the military and almost nothing on public schools."⁴ To the average poor Muslim family in Pakistan, the madrassas offer the only hope of an education for their sons (few schools accept females). The madrassas offer free tuition, and free room and board, which becomes another blessing for the poor Muslim family, as now they have one less mouth to feed. It is little wonder that madrassas have become so popular. So great is the popularity of the madrassas that many have long waiting lists of boys who are eager to be taken in and given food, a place to sleep and the only education that they can ever expect to get.

Much of the funding for madrassas comes from local Islamic charities. One of the five pillars of Islamic faith is charity or the *zakat* (almsgiving), a required annual donation of 2.5 percent of a Muslim's income. However, many madrassas receive financial support from other Islamic countries, especially Saudi Arabia. The Saudi government gives generously in return for the madrassas' teaching of Saudi Arabia's strict and puritanical form of Islam, Wahabism.

³ Information taken from *CIA Factbook*, found at: <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>

⁴ Rick Bragg, "A Nation Challenged: Schools; Shaping Young Islamic Hearts and Hatreds," *The New York Times*, 14 October 2001, section 1A, p. 1.

What do the Madrassas Teach?

Young boys from the ages of seven to the early twenties, spend about 12 years of their lives totally devoted to religious studies. During long 12-hour days, the studies include learning the Qur'an and the proper pronunciation of its verses, study of the *Hadith*, the recorded traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, learning the *Shari'ah*, or Islamic Law, as well as reading about the life of the Prophet. In particular, study in the madrassas almost always involves rote memorization of the Qur'an – spending hour upon hour reciting over and over a verse of the Qur'an, until the student has the exact pronunciation learned perfectly, and the verse permanently imbedded into his memory. For many of the madrassas the ultimate goal of study is for each student to memorize the entire Qur'an in the original Arabic. Since Arabic is not the language of Pakistan (Punjabi is the language of the majority, with significant minorities speaking Pashtu and Urdu) the student may not comprehend the exact meaning of the words he is memorizing.

In discussions with the headmaster of Jamiat-ul-Arabia, a madrassa in Quetta, Pakistan, the *Chicago Tribune*, reports: “The most important goal of Jamiat-ul-Arabia is to assure that each student has memorized the entire Koran and can recite its poetic verses with perfect rhythm and pronunciation. This feat is achieved by constant recitation, producing a cacophony in the room as students simultaneously recite aloud from different sections of the book while hypnotically bobbing back and forth in their seats.”⁵

Besides the study and rote memorization of the Qur'an, most Pakistani madrassas teach a predominantly extremist interpretation of the Qur'an, that of

⁵ Lisa Anderson, “Classes, the Koran and jihad: Religious schools in Pakistan teach extremist Islam,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 23 December 2001, p. 1.

the salafiyya⁶ movement of the Deobandi and Wahabist sects of Islam. They teach that the moral laxity of modern life and the corrupt influences of Western culture have tainted Islamic society. They hold that the presence of American troops on the sacred soil of Saudi Arabia desecrates the holy sites of Islamic faith. The only way to return to a state of grace with God is to remove the infidel from hallowed soil, and to return to the golden era of Islam, to return to a literal interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet. They teach that Jews, Christians, and Westerners in general are against all that Islam stands for – and therefore Jews, Christians, and Western society, are the enemies of Islam. The enemies of Islam can only exist in the *Dar al-harb* (House of War) and therefore Islam must be defended from the attacks of Western society and culture – defended by *jihad* or holy war.

The madrassas isolate the young students from outside influences; forbidding televisions, radios, and allowing only properly screened and approved newspapers, and magazines. The students are, "...inculcated with a powerful, not-so-academic message: that their highest honor and duty is to wage jihad, or holy war, against evil within themselves, and to defend Islam from its attackers ...1 million young men are taught each year to love jihad and be eager to embrace martyrdom."⁷

One of the most noted madrassas is the Darul Uloom Haqqania Madrassa, in Akora Khatak in the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan. It is from the Darul Uloom Haqqania School that most of the Taliban, including Mullah

⁶ The term *salafiyya* comes from an Arabic term meaning ancestors or pious forefathers. Followers of the salafiyya movement want to return to the pure values of the pious and righteous time of Muhammad and his companions.

⁷ Indira A.R. Lakshmanan, "In Some Schools, Jihad, Anger at US are Lessons," *The Boston Globe*, 4 October 2001, p. A32.

Muhammad Omar, graduated. Even before 9/11, Darul Uloom Haqqania hailed Usama bin Ladin as a “true believer,” and that America was sucking the precious oil resources of Saudi Arabia and they must be kicked out of the country.⁸

Television and newspapers have methodically covered the Taliban (Arabic for students) and their extremist views of an Islamic state. The head-to-toe *burkas* of the women, forbidding females from going to school and working, forbidding most all forms of entertainment – television, radios, newspapers and magazines (unless given the official Taliban seal of approval) were all banned, all in the name of furthering an Islamic state and society. Even the simple pleasure of flying a kite was forbidden. Every facet of society was supposed to be dedicated to Islam and God, and that devotion was to be carried out by way of jihad if necessary.

The Islamic zealotry and influence of the madrassas became so extreme in Afghanistan that textbooks intended to teach first-graders, instead inculcates a radical form of jihad into impressionable young minds. *The Washington Post* writes: “The textbook was meant for 6-year-olds, to teach first-graders the Pashto language of Afghanistan’s dominant ethnic group. But like many things under Taliban rule, the book’s messages were unmistakably political. Page four of the textbook teaches the word for sword, as in ‘Ahmed has a sword. He performs jihad with his sword. The word on the next page is weapon. ‘My uncle has a weapon. He performs jihad with his weapon.’...Even topics not remotely political or religious contained subtle messages about war and jihad. In one

⁸ Uli Schmetzer, “Islamic School Trains the Taliban. Some Fear Graduates’ Zealotry May Spread Across Central Asia,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 5 October 1998, p. 1.

arithmetic textbook, for example, children are taught to count from simple drawings – two knives, three anti-tank mines.”⁹

Shortly after the attacks of 11 September, students in Pakistani madrassas were asked their opinions of the attacks. Many condemned the killing of innocents, but blamed the attacks on Jews, saying it was a Jewish conspiracy, a plot by Israel to draw the United States into Israel’s conflict with the Palestinians and Islam. Many exclaimed it was Allah’s will, the wrath of God – God’s just and righteous punishment, a punishment inflicted because Americans engender the annihilation of Islam.

Pakistan’s President Prevez Musharraf has promised a crackdown on the madrassas, and in a speech on 12 January 2002, called for a major overhaul of madrassas. The curricula of each madrassas is to be rewritten to include secular subjects, ensuring that each child is to learn more than just rote memorization of the Qur’an – any madrassa found spreading hatred will be shut down.¹⁰

There is already considerable dissent among the Mullah’s who teach in the madrassas. Many say they will resist the ruling. They insist that they will continue to teach the Qur’an and Sunnah as God wills it.

Madrassas have become schools designed to spread hatred and loathing of the West and Western Society – they have become universities of jihad, where students are brainwashed into willingness to die as martyrs for Allah and Islam. For President Musharraf the inclusion of secular subjects into madrassa educational programs is more than just another government mandate, it has become critical for his political survival. Unless the hatred and zeal for

⁹ Keith B. Richburg, “Textbooks with a Subtext: ‘Ahmed Has a Sword,’” *The Washington Post*, 19 November 2001, p. A14.

¹⁰ See Ilene R. Prusher, “Musharraf vs. the mullahs: a fight for Islamic schools,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 30 January 2002, internet edition, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0130/p07s01-wosc.html>

martyrdom is contained, Pakistan may implode from the explosive fanaticism of Islamic extremism – and that implosion will spread burning fragments of intolerance across the face of the globe.

Chapter 20

FOUNDERS OF MODERN ISLAMIC REVIVALISM

Three Radical Ideologues: Al-Banna, Qutb, and Mawdudi

Usama bin Ladin and Al Qaeda draw their essential ideologies from the radical thinking of modern Islamic revivalists – revivalists such as Hasan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, and Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi, who in turn derived much of their philosophies from earlier extremist movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The essential basis of this revivalist ideology is to return Islam to its pure and simple roots – roots that were firmly planted by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions.

Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949)

Hasan al-Banna was the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*). He was born in a small Egyptian town in the Nile Delta in 1906. His father was a watch repairman as well as prayer leader and Qur'anic teacher in the local mosque. From an early age al-Banna was steeped in the Qur'an and its teachings. He memorized the Qur'an, and joined Islamic religious societies dedicated to promoting Islamic moral standards.

In 1923 al-Banna enrolled in the Dar al'Ulum college in Cairo, which was the prominent teaching college in Egypt. He immediately immersed himself in the writings and teachings of some of the founders of Islamic reform, the *Salafiyya* movement. He studied Muhammad Abduh, and Abduh's disciple Rashid Rida. It was Rashid Rida who most influenced al-Banna. Hasan al-Banna shared Rida's view that the decline of Islamic civilization was due to the corrupt and immoral

influences of the West. He advocated the total rejection of the decadent and dissolute ways of Western civilization, and emphasized the need to return to the foundations and purity of early Islam. As one author notes: “Banna was not a trained theologian or lawyer; the Islam he knew was the Islam of the Qur’an, pure and simple. For him, the reformist Islam of Rashid Rida, with its emphasis on going back to the very sources of the faith and on the need to apply these sources directly to the solution of contemporary problems, was made to order.”¹

Upon graduation from teachers college, al-Banna was appointed a teacher in a primary school in Ismailia, Egypt. Ismailia at the time was occupied by the British Army and was the center of British control of the Suez Canal. Al-Banna not only resented the colonial domination of the British, but he detested the corrupt influences that the British spread as well.

To help counter the problems associated with the military occupation, economic exploitation, cultural dominance and general arrogance of the British, al-Banna, in 1928 founded the Muslim Brotherhood. From the moment of its conception, the Brotherhood’s goal was to spread al-Banna’s message of revival, a message of returning to the pure ideals anchored in the Qur’an. By the late 1930s the Brotherhood had branches in all of Egypt’s provinces. By the mid-1940s the organization numbered well over 500,000 with members located throughout the Arab Middle East.

It was largely through al-Banna’s dynamism, drive and determination, as well as his extraordinary organizational skills that the Muslim Brotherhood grew so large so rapidly. He worked at institution building, by garnering the support of existing social networks, schools, mosques, etc. He worked hard at getting out his

¹ R. Stephen Humphreys, *Between Memory and Desire: The Middle East in a Troubled Age*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1999), p. 191.

message to the masses, relying on mass communication and in particular the press to spread the word.

In the mid to late 1940s the Brotherhood transitioned from a movement for moral reform to an Egyptian political movement advocating change. In 1948 the Brotherhood sent volunteers to fight in the war against the Israelis in Palestine. It was during this time that the Brotherhood became more radical, forming a secret group that orchestrated a series of assassinations of the Brotherhood's enemies.

These assassinations and rumors of a coup led Egyptian Prime Minister Nuqrashi Pasha to disband the organization in December 1948. Shortly, thereafter, the Prime Minister was assassinated. In February 1949, in a crowded market in Cairo, Hasan al-Banna was shot dead, presumably by agents of the government in retaliation for the Prime Minister's murder.

Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966)

Sayyid Qutb (pronounced SIGH-yid KUH-tahb) is viewed by many as the intellectual founder of modern Islamic revivalism. In his book *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World*, Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi states that Sayyid Qutb is "the theoretician par excellence of Islamic resurgence in the modern Arab world."² One writer in the *New York Times*, goes so far as to call Qutb the, "intellectual grandfather to Usama bin Ladin and his fellow terrorists."³

Sayyid Qutb was born in the village of Musha near Asyut in Upper Egypt in 1906. Qutb's father was well regarded in his village as a man of piety and learning, and Qutb, like al-Banna, was imbued from an early age in the teachings of the

² Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi, *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World*, (State University of New York Press, Albany, 1996), p. xi.

³ Robert Worth, "Bin Laden Wants U.S. to Strike Back Disproportionately – the Deep Intellectual Roots of Islamic Terror," *The New York Times*, 13 October 2001, p. A13.

Qur'an. Qutb had memorized the Qur'an by the time he was ten years old. When he was thirteen, his family moved to Cairo and Sayyid was enrolled in a preparatory school to prepare him for later schooling in the prestigious Dar al'Ulum teachers college. He enrolled in Dar al'Ulum in 1929, and graduated in 1933, whereupon he was granted a teaching position at the school. After teaching for a few years at Dar a'Ulum, he was given a position in the Egyptian Ministry of Education.

Qutb's first writings were works of fiction and literary criticism, but his writings turned more towards Islamic extremism after a short stay in the United States.

Qutb, who had become a critic of the Egyptian monarchy, came into conflict with officials within the Ministry of Education, and in 1948, was sent on a study mission to the United States, presumably to get him out of the way for a while. Qutb's experiences in the United States contributed to his slant towards radical Islamic extremism. While Qutb saw great advances in production and the sciences, he witnessed what he felt to be America's excessive materialism, racism, and sexual permissiveness. One author writes that: "...throughout his stay in Bogartian America of the late forties, Sayyid was repeatedly embarrassed by a sexual promiscuity that disgusted him."⁴ While in the U.S., Qutb saw Americans' reaction to the formation of Israel and the first Arab-Israeli war, and he felt that Americans too strongly favored the Israelis. At the same time he was hurt by what he felt was the one-sided character of the U.S. press in reporting Hasan al-Banna's murder. He felt that the press portrayed al-Banna as a criminal and that Egypt was better off with al-Banna dead.

⁴ Giles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984), p. 41.

In 1951 he returned to Egypt, enrolled in the Muslim Brotherhood and was soon writing tracts and articles for the society. It was at this time that his book, *Social Justice in Islam* was published. In the book he attacks the excesses of Western society and advocates a social justice, based upon the Qur'an, as an Islamic imperative.

In July 1952 the monarchy was overthrown by a group of military officers who called themselves the "Free Officers (Nasser, Sadat, and others)." Initially the Brotherhood and the Free Officers were seen to work together to mobilize popular support, but differences soon arose, especially after the Free Officers negotiated a treaty with Great Britain allowing them to keep forces in the canal zone.

In 1954 the Muslim Brotherhood was banned and Sayyid Qutb was imprisoned for the first time (3 months). Upon his release from prison he was appointed a member of the Guidance Council of the Brotherhood. In October of 1954, an attempt was made on Nasser's life. The assassination attempt was credited to the Brotherhood, and Qutb was returned to prison. He was released in 1965 only to be re-arrested eight months later for inciting armed insurrection and sedition. He was hanged in Cairo on 29 August 1966.

It was while in prison that Qutb wrote his most controversial works, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* (*In the Shade of the Qur'an*), and *Ma'alim fi l-Tariq* (*Milestones* sometimes translated as *Signposts*). It is in *Milestones* that Qutb outlines his concept of *jahiliyya*. *Jahiliyya* is mentioned in the Qur'an as the time before the Prophet received God's word, the barbaric time before the Muslims, the time of ignorance. As far as Qutb was concerned modern Islam had returned to the state of *jahiliyya*, a state of ignorance, disunity, and corruption, and the only way to come out of the state of ignorance was to return to the pure path of Islam as practiced by the Prophet and his companions. Qutb argued that Nasser and the Egyptian government were all

jahiliyya, and therefore illegitimate – the remedy for this illegitimacy: a true Islamic State. It was this argument and others that lead to Qutb's execution.

Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi (1903-1979)

Mawdudi was born in the city of Aurangabad in South India in 1903. He spent his early years in intense study with Islamic clerics and teachers. He was particularly influenced by the Deobandi movement (Deobandis heavily influenced Afghanistan's Taliban). Mawdudi moved to Hyderabad in 1928 to lead the Muslim community there.

Trying desperately to explain the decline in Muslim power to the Hindu community in Hyderabad, Mawdudi came to the conclusion that it was outside religions and peoples (outside Islam) that corrupted Islam and weakened it. The solution: purge Islam from all outside, corrupt influences.

In 1941, Mawdudi founded the *Jama'at al-Islami* Party in Lahore, Pakistan. Much the same as Qutb, Mawdudi urged the creation of a pure Islamic state. To achieve that pure Islamic state, Muslims must conduct a *jihad*, a *jihad* to overturn the whole universal social order and establish the pure Islamic state – a pure Islamic state based upon a return to the values and traditions of the Prophet and his early companions. Mawdudi argued that Islam had not lost its intrinsic values, he contended that Islam was just as dynamic today as it was yesterday. Mawdudi believed that people had lost the understanding of Islam, and they were not conscious of its superiority over other ideologies.

Mawdudi authored around 150 books and delivered hundreds of speeches and lectures outlining his ideal Islamic state – an Islamic state that:

“...wants the whole earth and does not content itself with only a part thereof. It wants and requires the entire inhabited world. ...In order to realize this

lofty desire, Islam wants to employ all forces and means that can be employed for bringing about a universal all-embracing revolution. It will spare no efforts for the achievement of this supreme objective. This far-reaching struggle that continuously exhausts all forces and this employment of all possible means are called jihad.”⁵

It is this type of rhetoric that fuels the fire of Islamic radicalism. Al-Banna, Qutb, and Mawdudi, all exemplify “the ideal” Muslim for today’s extreme Islamic zealot. It is just this sort of fanatical expression that urges *jihad* – a *jihad* that ultimately leads to a clash of civilizations – a clash of Islam versus the West.

⁵ Quoted in: Rudolph Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam*, (Marcus Weiner Publishers, Princeton, N.J. 1996) p. 128.

Chapter 21

THE POLITICS OF ISLAM

In other essays I have discussed elements of political Islam (see chapters 8, 17, and 19). In those essays I have mentioned that in Islam there is no true separation of church and state. In theory Islam governs every aspect of a Muslim's life from cradle to grave. As one Muslim ideologue stated: "...the major difficulty of studying Islam is that the inquirer finds that all its aspects are interconnected, so that one cannot possibly be separated from another. Because this religion is essentially a unity, worship and work, political and economic theory, legal demands and spiritual exhortations, faith and conduct, this world and the world to come, all these are related parts of one comprehensive whole."¹

Muslims eat, conduct business, marry, and conduct war, etc., all in accordance with the Qur'anic scriptures, the Sunna of the Prophet, and the law of Islam, Shari' ah. It is no less so for things political, it is only in interpretation and in degree that one can see differences in how Muslim scholars, thinkers and ideologues, look at the politics of Islam. According to one author: "Islamism has become, in fact, the primary vehicle and vocabulary of most political discourse throughout the Muslim world."²

Early in Islamic history, after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, the leader of Islam was the Caliph or *Khalifah* (successor to the spiritual and secular leadership of the Muslim Community). The Caliph was not only the spiritual

¹ Sayyid Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, translated by John B. Hardie, revised by Hamid Algar, (Islamic Publications International, Onoenta, New York, 1953, revised edition 2000), p. 113.

² Graham E. Fuller, "The Future of Political Islam," *Foreign Affairs*, (March/April 2002, Vol 81, No. 2) p. 50.

leader of the Muslims, but the secular leader and military commander as well. In deciding legal questions and matters of government, the early caliphs would first look to the Qur'an for an answer. Next the Sunna or example of the Prophet would be examined, and then if no analogous situation would help in a ruling, the caliphs were supposed to use a process of consensus to make a ruling. This process of consensus is called *ijima* and became a primary factor in developing the law of Islam or Shari'ah. But not every caliph legislated by consensus many would legislate by fiat. It was not uncommon for a caliph to issue an arbitrary order or decree, but in issuing such decrees the caliphs derived their authority from the Qur'an. The power of the caliphs originated from the Qur'an, the Sunna, and the Shari'ah and any deviation from the principles of Islam would cast doubt on the legitimacy of the caliph's rule. In Islamic history there are many instances of assassinations of caliphs and rulers, as well as civil wars, because certain elements of the body politic did not agree with the decisions and judgment of the ruler. In these instances the caliphs were regarded as apostates or impious leaders who had fallen from the straight path of Islam.

The legitimacy of an Islamic ruler comes from the Qur'an. Surah 4:59 states: "Believers, obey God and obey the Apostle and those in authority among you."³ Sayyid Qutb, the radical Islamic ideologue, uses this verse to discuss the limits of obedience owed an Islamic ruler, he states: "Obedience to one who holds authority is derived from obedience to Allah and the Messenger. The ruler in Islamic law is not to be obeyed because of his own person; he is to be obeyed only by virtue of holding his position through the law of Allah and His Messenger; his right to obedience is derived from his observance of that law and

³ *The Koran*, translated with notes by N.J. Dawood, (Penguin Books, London, England, 5th Edition with revisions, 1993), p. 67.

from no other thing. If he departs from the law, he is no longer entitled to obedience and his orders need no longer be obeyed.”⁴

Today, many Islamic countries have legal systems and constitutions that are a mixture of Shari’ah and European legal codes, but even where a constitution seems based on a European code, many countries will say that their laws and constitution are based on Islamic law or Shari’ah. As one writer notes, “(shari’ah) ...provides a measuring stick by which the faithful judge the performance of their rulers. Islamic concepts of morality and justice are rooted in *sharia*, so that even when *sharia* is not formally incorporated into a state’s legal system, the state must coexist with it. Political appeals in the name of *sharia* are difficult to ignore, because *sharia* by definition represents justice, and it is politically risky for the ruler of any Muslim society to act in violation of what his people understand *sharia* to require.”⁵

Professor John L. Esposito of Georgetown University has placed government in modern Islamic states into three categories: secular, Muslim and Islamic. He states:

“Turkey chose a totally secular path, separating Islam from the state and thus restricting religion to private life. States like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan formally proclaimed the Islamic character of their governments and the primacy of Islamic law; this Islamic commitment was not only to legitimate domestic rule but also to strengthen foreign policy with other Muslim countries. The vast majority of Muslim countries emerged as Muslim states. While indebted to Western models for their political, legal, and social development, they incorporated certain Islamic constitutional provisions. For some Islam is declared the state religion, and the *Shariah* is said to be a source of law whether or not this is true in reality.”⁶

⁴ Sayyid Qutb, *Op. Cit.*, p. 121.

⁵ Thomas W. Lippman, *Understanding Islam: An Introduction to the Muslim World*, (Meridian, Penguin Books, New York, 1995) pp. 72-73.

⁶ John L. Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, (Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, New York, 1984, 4th Edition 1998) p. 99.

Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Tunisia, and most other Islamic countries fall into the “Muslim State” category. The separation of church and state – the rule by Qur’an, Sunna, and Shari’ah is the ideal; however, practically and pragmatically, we can see that in Islam there is a gradient scale of using Shari’ah as the mode of government and law in Islamic countries. At one end of the scale we find Turkey the secular state, and at the other end we find Saudi Arabia, the Islamic state. Even in Saudi Arabia, however, there are administrative regulations such as traffic laws that have no religious impact and therefore tend to mirror similar secular laws in the West, but the predominance of Saudi government is fixed to the Qur’an, Sunna and Shari’ah.

Today, the great challenge to Islamic governments and the rule of law is the challenge made by Islamic fundamentalism (there are a lot of scholars who dislike the term fundamentalism, but since it has such a wide usage and understanding, I have elected to use it for this essay).

With the end of colonialism and the Second World War, there was a surge in nationalism in Islamic countries, and for a time there was a tendency to borrow from the West and to champion Western ideals. But after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war and the subsequent defeat and humiliation of the Arabs (referred to as the *nakbah* or disaster by the Arabs), Arab populations began to respond more and more to the rhetoric of the Islamic fundamentalist.

Arabs saw the humiliation of the loss of Palestine to the Jews as the will of Allah, and since everything, in the view of Islam, is predestined by the will of Allah, the loss of Palestine must have been due to a religious shortcoming. Fundamentalists saw the nationalism borrowed from the West, in fact almost all things Western, as un-Islamic and therefore blasphemous. Muslims began to

pose the following questions: “What had gone wrong in Islam? Was the success of the West due to the superiority of Christendom, the backwardness of Islam, or the faithlessness of the community? How could Muslims realize God’s will in a state governed by...non-Muslim law?”⁷

Islam is still struggling with the above questions and fundamentalist dogma stills resonates in parts of the Islamic world. According to Professor Esposito, there are three essential types of fundamentalists, 1) revivalists or traditional reformists, 2) Islamic modernists, and 3) neo-revivalists or radical extremists.⁸

Revivalists or traditional reformists insist on literal and complete observance of the Qur’an, Sunna, and Shari’ah as they apply to everyday life. The argument of the revivalists is an answer to the question of “what had gone wrong in Islam,” and that answer is that Muslims had strayed from God’s plan as demonstrated by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions during the golden years of Islam. The remedy is for Muslims to return again to the ideal era of Islam. Everything that is needed to conduct a righteous and virtuous life is contained in the Qur’an, the Sunna, and the acts and deeds of Muhammad and his companions. What more is needed? Why follow Western practices? The revivalists believe that Islam is a complete way of life, embodying, politics, law, and religion as well as societal customs and mores. They accept Western science and technology, but only if it does not interfere or contradict the Qur’an, the Sunna, and the Shari’ah.⁹ It is the Wahabi movement in Saudi Arabia that best represents this type of Islamic fundamentalism.

It was Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahab (1703-1792) who joined forces with Muhammad Ibn Saud to lead a revolutionary reform movement in Saudi Arabia.

⁷ John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1998). p. 126.

⁸ *ibid.*, Chapters 4 and 5.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 165.

The military leadership of Ibn Saud and the doctrinaire beliefs of al-Wahab combined to purify the Arabian peninsula of the believed excesses of Sufis and the laxity of the Islamic community to keep and enforce religious practices. The puritanical zeal of the Wahabis (they called themselves *Muwahiddun*, or unitarians, because of the belief in one God), lead to the destruction of revered Muslim holy sites. They destroyed the tombs of the Prophet and many of the early caliphs as well as the Shi'ite venerated tomb of Husayn at Karbala (to this day, the Shi'ah community feels rancor over the desecration). These sites were destroyed because they were believed to be shrines of idolatry or saint worship and this practice is against the straight path of Islam. Saudi Arabia is today still ruled and governed by a combination of the Royal Saudi Family in the seat of power and the descendants of al-Wahab in many of the highest Islamic clerical positions.

The second type of fundamentalist is the Islamic modernist. Islamic modernism is a response rather than a reaction to the West. Islamic modernists pressed for a reinterpretation of Islamic principles to reform Islamic society. They believed in selectively adapting certain aspects of Western societies, especially science and technology.¹⁰ Islam must reach an understanding and adapt some aspects of the West, but only in ways that agree with the Qur'an, Sunna, and Shari'ah. It is Muhammad Abduh who symbolizes the Islamic Modernist School.

Abduh founded the salafiyya movement, which argues that Muslims need to follow the example of the *Salaf* or revered ancestors – Muhammad and his companions, but Abduh also "...maintained that while those regulations of Islamic law that governed worship (*ibadat*, such as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage)

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 127.

were immutable, the vast majority of regulations concerned with social affairs (*muamalat*, such as penal, commercial, and family laws) were open to change.”¹¹

The third form of Islamic fundamentalism is the neo-revivalist or radical extremist. The radical extremist believes in the establishment of a pure Islamic state, governed exclusively by shari’ah. The defining difference between revivalists or traditional reformists and the neo-revivalist or radical extremist, is that the radical extremist believe, “that theological doctrine and political realism necessitate violent revolution.”¹² The Islamic government that does not follow the laws of Islam, the shari’ah, is a *jahiliyya*¹³ government and a *jahiliyya* government is one that has departed from the straight path, renounced Islam and the shari’ah, and therefore illegitimate.

Since a *jahiliyya* government is illegitimate, then true Muslims must engage in a holy war, a *jihad* to defend and restore Islam by removing the blasphemy. Not only governments, but also individuals who fail to follow the shari’ah and the ideals of the pure Islamic state are apostates and *jihad* must be conducted against them.

It goes without saying that Jews, Christians, and Western society are *jahiliyya*, and it is because of a perceived Western antagonism towards Islam and especially the support of the United States for alleged Israeli atrocities, that radical extremists believe that it is a religious duty to conduct *jihad* against the West. The radical extremist believe that a clash between Islam and the West is inevitable, it is

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 131.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 166.

¹³ *Jahiliyya* refers to the “period of ignorance” in pre-Islamic society before the enlightenment of the Qur’an.

a clash that can only end in the elimination of the great Satan, the U.S., and victory for the true Islamic state.¹⁴

The radical extremist view represents the political views of Usama bin Ladin and Al Qa'ida. Bin Ladin sees the United States as *jahiliyya*, as the great Satan – an evil society that supports neo-colonialism and Zionist terrorism. Usama bin Ladin promises an end to the lies, torments and humiliations of the West, as well as the rewards of paradise for those who do God's will – the conduct of a holy war against the United States, the despoilers of sacred Saudi soil. Bin Ladin also exhorts that the current Saudi regime is *jahiliyya* because it allows the Americans to defile Islam by stationing U.S. troops on holy Saudi land, the location of Islam's holiest sites, Mecca and Medina.

For the neo-revivalist, or radical extremist, the clash of civilizations is inevitable, and one which the United States must be ready to resist, as indeed we are in conducting the current war on global terrorism. Therefore, whatever the label, modernists, liberals, moderates, etc., we need to find those who promote beliefs that can accommodate Western society. But we must be careful and distinguish the modernist from the radical, because it is with the modernist that Western civilization has the best hope of peace and harmony. Islam and the West need not clash and in an effort to prevent that clash, we must first find, nurture and support the modernists – and combat the radical extremist.

¹⁴ See, e.g., Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, Op.Cit., p. 166.

Chapter 22

THE ANATOMY OF A SUICIDE BOMBER

What motivates the suicide bomber? Why would anyone want to sacrifice their lives in the instant flash of a bomb's explosion? The answer in one word (at least the answer for most Arab suicide bombers): martyrdom.

Israel has felt the impact of suicide bombers for years. The United States has as also experienced the terror, pain and grief caused by the suicide bomber, most recently on 9/11, but also from the suicide bombing that killed 241 Marines in Lebanon in 1983, the 1996 bombing of Khobar Towers, that killed 19 U.S. servicemen, and the 12 October 2000 bombing of the USS Cole that killed 17. All conducted by Islamic zealots who willing sacrificed their lives for: what? I will attempt to answer that question.

The typical suicide bomber (all have been male¹) is in his late teens and early twenties, unmarried, and most often unemployed. Many are intelligent university students, some with advanced degrees. Many are poor and all have been young. Samuel P. Huntington in his book, *The Clash of Civilizations*, writes that the proportion of youth (ages fifteen to twenty-four) now exceeds over 20 percent of the total population in the Middle East.² The unemployment rates for young

¹ After writing this chapter, the first female suicide bomber, Wafa Idriss took her own life, killed an elderly Israeli and wounded scores of others. See, e.g., Lee Hockstader, "Palestinians Hail a Heroine: Israelis See Rising Threat," *The Washington Post*, 31 January 2002, p. A20.

² Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (Touchstone, Simon and Schuster, New York, NY, 1996) p. 118.

men in the Middle East is staggering³ – to be young and poor is a volatile combination, ready tinder for the match of Islamic radicalism. With no job, and little prospects for employment, Middle Eastern youth, especially Palestinian young men, are ripe for the terrorist's harvest and the promised rewards of martyrdom.

Martyrdom

The Qur'an is replete with references to martyrdom, in Surah, 3:157-158, it states: "If you should die or be slain in the cause of God, His forgiveness and His mercy would surely be better than all the riches they amass. If you should die or be slain, before Him you shall all be gathered."⁴ Surah, 3:169-171 states: "Never think that those who were slain in the cause of God are dead. They are alive, and well provided for by their Lord; pleased with His gifts and rejoicing that those they have left behind, who have not yet joined them, have nothing to fear or to regret; rejoicing in God's grace and bounty. God will not deny the faithful their reward."⁵

What is the reward of the martyr? Surah, 38:49-52 states: "They shall recline on jeweled couches face to face, and there shall wait on them immortal youths with bowls and ewers and a cup of purest wine (that will neither pain their heads nor take away their reason); with fruits of their own choice and flesh of fowls they relish. And theirs shall be the dark-eyed houris, chaste as hidden pearls: a guerdon for their deeds."⁶ Houris are mentioned many times in the Qur'an as

³ Unemployment rates in general for Palestinians exceed 40%, it is much higher for young men: Statement by Peter Hansen, Commissioner-general of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to the United Nations special political and decolonization committee 1 November 1998. <http://www.un.org/unrwa/pr/sreports.html>

⁴ *The Koran*, translated with notes by N.J. Dawood, (Penguin Books, London, England, 5th Edition with revisions, 1993), p. 56.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 379.

rewards for the righteous. They are virgins –companions with beautiful, big, and lustrous eyes, placed in paradise to satisfy the righteous man’s carnal desires.

Can anyone wonder why the poor, unemployed young Palestinian, would not want to become a martyr, a hero to his people? He has zero prospects for a job (which equates to zero prospects for marriage and any kind of a happy life). Because of his steady and rigorous fundamentalist indoctrination, he devoutly believes in the literal word of the Qur’an as God’s holy dictum – he believes in a real sense, not in a metaphysical, or mystical sense, but in a real, palpable sense, that he will get the rewards exactly, word for word as promised in the Qur’an. Apart from his rewards in paradise, the martyr’s family is assured better prospects. A recent article in *The Christian Science Monitor*, reports that, “Martyrs win salvation for 70 of their relatives and enjoy the eternal pleasures of a like number of heavenly virgins.” The article goes on and adds, “When Palestinian suicide bombers die, their families receive accolades not condolences.”⁷ Many terrorist organizations promise the prospective bomber that their families will never suffer from hunger or financial deprivations.

You may ask, isn’t martyrdom suicide? Yes, many in Islam will say that the act of self-immolation in a terrorist bombing is suicide – as the Qur’an and *hadith* both state that suicide is a mortal sin.⁸ The terrorist will say no, it is not suicide, but simply the act of a soldier in God’s cause, Jihad. The martyr is simply the vehicle for God’s justice, like a soldier pulling the trigger enabling the bullet to strike the enemy – the martyr is simply enabling the bomb to destroy the infidel. But what about killing the innocent? Terrorists, and martyrdom-seekers have an answer for that too, as a prospective Palestinian martyr is quoted: “According to my religion, I’m doing Jewish children a favor, because if they get killed (in an

⁷ “A Suicide Bomber’s World,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 14 August 2001.

⁸ The Qur’an, Surah 4:29 prohibits killing oneself. See, also, the *Hadith*, translation of Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 2, Book 23, Numbers 445 and 446.

operation) they go to Heaven instead of dying as a soldier and going to Hell.”⁹ Motivated by religious fervor, believing that they are devoid of hope and promise on earth, the prospective martyr passionately believes that, not only will they receive the bounteous rewards of Allah in paradise, but that they will become earthly heroes and their families will never suffer the ills and humiliations that they have suffered and would continue to suffer.

⁹ “A Suicide Bomber’s World,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 14 August 2001.

Chapter 23

ASSASSINS: AN EARLY ISLAMIC CULT OF TERROR

“This Old Man has by his witchcraft so bemused the men of his country, that they neither worship nor believe in any God but himself. Likewise he entices them in a strange manner with such hopes and with promises of such pleasures with eternal enjoyment, that they prefer rather to die than to live. Many of them even, when standing on a high wall, will jump off at his nod or command, and, shattering their skulls, die a miserable death. The most blessed, so he affirms, are those who shed the blood of men and in revenge for such deeds themselves suffer death. When therefore any of them have chosen to die in this way, murdering someone by craft and themselves dying so blessedly in revenge for him, he himself hands them knives which are, so to speak, consecrated to this affair, and then intoxicates them with such a potion that they are plunged into ecstasy and oblivion, displays to them by his magic certain fantastic dreams, full of pleasures and delights, or rather of trumpery, and promises them eternal possession of these things in reward for such deeds.”¹

Is this an account describing Usama bin Ladin and his followers the Al Qa’ida? The zealotry and willingness for self-sacrifice sounds very familiar doesn’t it? But the above quotation is not about Usama bin Ladin – it is an account written after the Third Crusade by the German chronicler, Arnold of Lubeck, an account of the mysterious Old Man of the Mountain, Sinan ibn Salman ibn Muhammad, also known as Rashid al-Din.

¹ An account of the Assassins by the German Chronicler Arnold of Lubeck, quoted in: Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1967), pp. 4-5.

Sinan ibn Salman ibn Muhammad was the Shaykh or Grand Master of a radical and secret offshoot of the Islamic sect of the Shi'ah branch of Islam, known as the Isma'ilis or Seveners – Seveners because they hold that Isma'il, the eldest son of the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq, is the seventh and true Imam. In Shi'ite Islam it is the belief that the descendants of Muhammad's daughter Fatima and son-in-law, Ali, are the legitimate Caliphs or leaders of the Muslim faith, and therefore the Imams are the descendants of Ali. The Shi'ites believe that the Imams inherited the spiritual and secular sovereignty of the Prophet and are divinely guided. The great majority of the Shi'ites are called Twelvers and follow the line of Isma'il's younger brother Musa up to the 12th Imam who disappeared around 878 AD.

The followers of Isma'il or Isma'ilis developed an intricate and somewhat mystical theology. They followed the Qur'an and Sunna of the Prophet, but also developed a philosophical view of the universe and a respect for ancient Greek thought. The Isma'ilis also believed in a process of secret knowledge, or the *Ta'wil al-Batin*, where every verse of the Qur'an, was found to have a secret and esoteric import and meaning. The second and secret meaning of the Qur'an could only be interpreted and revealed by the Imam and taught to the disciples. To the Isma'ilis the Imam is the rightly guided one with divine attributes. The Imams, as Professor Lewis states: "...were divinely inspired and infallible – in a sense indeed themselves divine, since the Imam was the microcosm, the personification of the metaphysical soul of the universe. As such, he was the fountainhead of knowledge and authority – of the esoteric truths that were hidden from the uninformed, and of commands that required total and unquestioning obedience."²

² Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1967), p. 27.

The Isma'ilis, being a dissident sect of Islam, found themselves subject to persecution by the majority Sunni sect. The Isma'ilis, indeed many of the Shi'ite branch, practiced what is called *taqiyya*, or a practice of concealment and pretense – pretending not to be of the Shi'ite faith or concealing the fact that they were Shi'ah. This was a method of self-preservation from the intolerance and repression of the Sunnis.

In the Isma'ili belief it is the *da'i* who is second only to the Imam, who seeks converts, enlists disciples and leads the believers – essentially the *da'is* are the missionaries, the preachers who proselytize and actively seek converts. In the Isma'ili religious hierarchy the head *da'i* is known as the *da'i al-du'at*, or the Grand Master. The devotees, disciples or followers, were called *fiḍa'i*.

The Isma'ilis quietly but resolutely began to gain a following. The first major expansion of the Isma'ili camp took place in North Africa. About 910 AD Ubaydullah came to Tunisia, claimed descent from the Prophet through Ali and the Prophet's daughter Fatima and claimed to be an Imam. He proclaimed himself the Mahdi (redeemer, chosen one, or Messiah) and Caliph. Ubaydullah established the Fatamid (descended from the Prophet's daughter Fatima) dynasty, which in 969 conquered Egypt and established the city of Cairo as their capital. The Isma'ili believers now had the support of a great power in the Fatamid rulers of Egypt.

It is during the time of the Fatamid rule in Egypt, under one of the Greatest Isma'ili "Grand Masters," Hasan-i Sabbah (Hasan the Sevens), that the Assassins got their start. Hasan-i Sabbah was an extremely charismatic leader. He was born³ in a Sunni village in Iran, to a Shi'ite family of the Twelver sect. About the

³ The exact date of his birth is unknown but it is placed sometime in the middle of the eleventh century.

age of seventeen he was converted to the Sevener sect and began his life of proselytizing and seeking converts.

In 1078 Hasan-i Sabbah traveled to Egypt the seat of the Fatamid Empire and the Isma'ili sect. His stay in Egypt was short as he soon came into conflict with the de facto ruler of the Fatamid court, the Vizier and Army Commander, Badr al-Jamali. The Fatamid caliph Mustansir had designated his eldest son Nizar as his successor, but near the end of his reign Mustansir lost control of his empire to the powerful Badr al-Jamali. When Mustansir died, Badr al-Jamali's son Afdal had Mustansir's younger son Mustali placed on the throne instead of Nizar. Nizar tried unsuccessfully to claim his rightful title as Caliph, but was imprisoned and killed. Hasan-i Sabbah and his followers insisted that the rightful ruler and Imam should be Nizar, and they broke away from the Fatamid Isma'ilis and began their own separate sect. Because of their following of Nizar as Imam, the Assassins are sometimes called Nizaris.

Hasan-i Sabbah set himself up in a fortress in a high mountain peak in Iran, a place called Alamut and sometimes referred to as "the eagles nest." It was in this impregnable fortress that Hasan-i Sabbah set about his missionary work with an earnest enthusiasm.

From Alamut the Grand Master set out and gained other strongholds and mountain fortresses. He conducted campaigns of fear and terror against those opposing his brand of Isma'ili belief. He also began training and equipping his *fidai'i*. He began a rigorous process of training by selecting strong, intelligent young men and boys. From a young age they were instructed in disguises, languages, impersonation, especially the dress and manners of monks, merchants, soldiers and important figures of the court. They were painstakingly instructed in the use of the dagger – meticulously drilled on the exact spot to thrust the dagger in the intended victim's chest to ensure a quick death.

To gain the *fiḍa'ī*'s loyalty and trustworthiness, the young initiates were thoroughly indoctrinated in the mysteries and secrets of the sect. They were told they would receive hidden powers and timeless wisdom and shown the immeasurable pleasures of paradise. Each disciple had to go through nine degrees of initiation. The neophyte swore his loyalty and promised, upon pain of death, never to reveal the secrets of the sect. Blind, absolute obedience to the Grand Master was essential and demanded of each *fiḍa'ī*.

Legend has it that Hasan-i Sabbah had built near his fortress at Alamut, the most beautiful gardens, and in these gardens he would have bountiful plates of the finest and richest foods, abundant wines, and beautiful maidens who lounged on the finest silk carpets. It is said that he would take an initiate, drug them with hashish until they fell into a deep sleep, and then place them into the magnificent gardens. Gardens designed to appear as the gardens of paradise in the Qur'an – the type of paradise and pleasures that the Qur'an promises the martyr. The young disciples would awake amid the marvels of the gardens, and believe they were in paradise. Again, they were induced to sleep by drugs and would then awake in front of the Grand Master. Knowing their disappointment at having departed paradise, the Grand Master assured each of his students the opportunity to return to paradise upon execution of the Grand Master's mission – a mission of murder – the killing of any and all enemies of the Grand Master and his sect.

Marco Polo on his travels visited the fortress of Alamut about 20 years after the Mongols had destroyed it, and in his journal he describes the Grand Master or Shaykh's gardens:

“He had had made in a valley between two mountains the biggest and most beautiful garden that was ever seen, planted with all the finest fruits in the world and containing the most splendid mansions and palaces that were ever seen, ornamented with gold and with likenesses of all that is beautiful on earth, and also four conduits, one flowing with wine, one with milk, one with

honey, and one with water. There were fair ladies there and damsels, the loveliest in the world, unrivalled at playing every sort of instrument and at singing and dancing. And he gave his men to understand that this garden was Paradise. That is why he had made it after this pattern, because Mahomet assured the Saracens that those who go to Paradise will have beautiful women to their hearts' content to do their bidding, and will find there rivers of wine and milk and honey and water. So he had had this garden made like the Paradise that Mahomet promised to the Saracens, and the Saracens of this country believed that it really was Paradise."⁴

Marco Polo adds:

"And when he wanted emissaries to send on some mission of murder, he would administer the drug to as many as he pleased; and while they slept he had them carried into his palace. When these youths awoke and found themselves in the castle within the palace, they were amazed and by no means glad, for the Paradise from which they had come was not a place that they would ever willingly have left. They went forthwith to the Sheikh and humbled themselves before him, as men who believed that he was a great prophet. When he asked them whence they came, they would answer Paradise of which Mahomet had told their ancestors; and they would tell their listeners all that they had found there. And the others who heard this and had not been there were filled with a great longing to go to this Paradise; they longed for death so that they might go there, and looked forward eagerly to the day of their going."⁵

The Crusaders gave the Assassins their name; they had heard the stories of the Assassins working themselves up to a frenzy before a mission, in part through the use of hashish. They were locally called the *hashshashin*, or users of hashish. Thus, the term Assassin, which has become a noun in the English language meaning a person who commits murder; especially, one who murders a politically important person either for hire or from fanatical motives. The Assassins use of hashish has

⁴ Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, translated, edited and with an introduction by Ronald Latham, (Penguin Books, London, 1958), pp. 70-71.

⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

been disputed by several scholars, the original Arabic term meaning dry herbage or fodder, and subsequently used to denote Indian cannabis. The term colloquially was often used as a term of insult and applied to the Assassins since they were heretics and deviants from the Sunni majority.⁶ Taking note from the many zealot suicide bombers of today, we can see that the promised delicacies of paradise is more than enough to encourage the suicide bomber to blow themselves up, without the need to induce a state of trance with drugs.

At the time of Hasan-i Sabbah, Alamut was positioned within the Empire of the Seljuk Turks, who were predominately Sunni Muslims, and the Vizier of the Caliphate, Nizam al-Mulk became the Assassins bitter enemy. But it was Nizam al-Mulk who was the first important statesmen to fall to the Assassin's dagger.

In 1092 on his way to Baghdad, Nizam was approached by a youth in disguise as a beggar. The youth came close to the Vizier, drew his dagger and fatally stabbed Nizam. Nizam al-Mulk thus became the first minister to die by the orders of the Grand Master, Hasan-i Sabbah.

Murder became the expedient political weapon for Hasan-i Sabbah, and more and more his *fiida'i* employed clever disguises, and ruses to catch their targets unawares. Hasan-i Sabbah and his cult of zealous murderers spread panic and fear throughout the realm of Islam and their fame (or infamy) became known to medieval Europe.

Hasan-i Sabbah died in his fortress of Alamut in 1124. Many Caliphs and Sultans had tried to remove him and his followers from the Eagles Nest, but all had failed. Hasan-i Sabbah's successors continued in his footsteps. The order spread to Syria, and it is another of the Grand Masters, Sinan ibn Salman ibn

⁶ Bernard Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

Muhammad, who was best known to the Crusaders as the Old Man of the Mountain.

Sinan quickly became infamous for his numerous underhanded strategies and tricks. His many scheming feats and deceits were just as notorious as any of Hasan-i Sabbah's. One of Sinan's victims was the Christian King of Jerusalem, Conrad of Montferrat, who was murdered in 1192 in Tyre by Assassins disguised as Christian Monks. But the most famous of all of Sinan's adversaries was Salah al-Din, better known to the West as Saladin.

It was Saladin, a Kurd, and a Sunni Muslim, who finally abolished the last remnants of the Fatamid Caliphate in Egypt and established himself as ruler. From Egypt, Saladin launched a campaign against Muslim Syria in order to establish himself there so that he could conduct a *jihad* against the infidel Crusaders.

On at least two occasions the Assassin's daggers were meant for the heart of Saladin and both times they failed. In 1175 the first attempt took place. The Assassins disguised as soldiers penetrated Saladin's camp. A neighboring noble recognized the Assassins, and a desperate fight broke out. The Assassins were killed but not before they took the lives of many of Saladin's guards.

The second attempt on Saladin's life occurred a year after the first, in 1176 when Saladin's forces were besieging Azaz. Assassins, again disguised as Saladin's soldiers, ran at him in an attempt to stab him with their daggers, but their thrusts were stopped by Saladin's armor. After this second attempt, Saladin took elaborate precautions against the murder attempts, letting no one that he did not personally know come near him.⁷

⁷ For a detailed account of the attempts on Saladin's life see: Bernard Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp.

An uneasy truce was agreed upon by Saladin and Sinan, allowing Saladin to concentrate his full efforts against the Crusaders. Sinan's last act of murder was Conrad of Montferrat mentioned above – he died soon after his assassins had taken the life of the Christian King of Jerusalem. But Sinan ibn Salman ibn Muhammad lived on in the chronicles and legends of the Crusaders as the mysterious and secretive Old Man of the Mountain, the Grand Master and Shaykh of the feared Isma'ili sect known as the Assassins.

There were successors to Sinan in Syria and to Hasan-i Sabbah's heir in Iran, but none could master the repute of Sinan, the Old Man of the Mountain and Hasan-i Sabbah, the First Grand Master.

In the middle 1200s, Mongols under the command Hulegu, grandson of Jenghiz Khan, surrounded the fortress of Alamut and held it under siege for three years. The Grand Master and his Assassins surrendered or were put to death, thus eliminating the last major stronghold of the Assassins.

The Isma'ilis and descendants of the Assassins live on – the Khojas who were once strong in Punjab (now part of Pakistan) are part of the line of Isma'ilis. The present Aga Khan is considered the hereditary Imam of the Isma'ilis and thus a direct descendent of Muhammad.

The Isma'ili Assassins were not the first group to utilize political murder, and perhaps not the last. Throughout history assassinations, regicides, and other political executions have taken place.

In Palestine shortly after the Romans destroyed the Jewish second temple (built by Herod) in 70 AD, the infamous *Sicarii* undertook assassination and murder in an effort to free the Jews from Roman rule. The *Sicarii* were zealots who hid sharp daggers called *sicarii*, in their robes (thus the name). They would

not only kill Romans, but would kill any Jew who they believed cooperated with the Romans, as traitors. These “dagger-men” would mix and blend in with the throngs of people shopping in the busy streets, slip up behind their appointed disloyal Jewish victim and stab them in the back. They would then quickly disappear amongst the crowd. It was the fanatical *Sicarii*, along with their women and children, who took their own lives rather than surrender to the Romans on the fortress-mount, that towers over the Dead Sea, called Masada.

Chapter 24

“A PLAGUE ON BOTH YOUR HOUSES”

The title to this essay is borrowed from a line in Shakespeare’s “Romeo and Juliet.” Mercutio, a friend of Romeo, lies dying from a sword wound in a blood feud fight brought about by grievances between the houses of Capulet and Montague. Mercutio recognizing the folly and waste of the blood feud, cries out, “A plague on both your houses.”

The clash between Israel and the Palestinians is very much a “blood feud.” Each side, by various acts, perpetuates the conflict, and each side, in its own way, instills hatred, and suspicion in their children. Recently, the Israelis gouged trenches in the Palestinian airport’s runway in Gaza (11 January), having just the day before (10 January) razed dozens of Palestinian refuge homes in the Gaza Strip, leaving hundreds homeless.

In 1994, I personally witnessed the demolition of a Palestinian home while serving as a UN Military Observer, for the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in the Middle East. I had been on a tour of UNTSO headquarters in Government House in Jerusalem, when an Australian Major asked me if I wanted to see the Israelis blow up a house. We piled into his white UN staff car and drove to East Jerusalem. We arrived just in time to see Palestinians – men, women and children, scrambling to get their possessions out of the house. Many Palestinian homes will have three or more generations of the same family living in the same house. Often the houses will appear unfinished with steel concrete reinforcement rods sticking out of the tops of the cinderblock in the unfinished upper floor. This is because many Palestinians will just add

another floor when their children or grandchildren get married. In the case I witnessed, there were three generations of the same family.

The whole neighborhood turned out to help the family hastily remove all their belongings. I learned in this case that a teenager, the grandson of the elder family member, had been accused of plotting a terrorist act (I never did find out exactly what) – accused, not tried and convicted, simply accused. The Israeli soldiers will usually give the family two hours to remove everything they own. They then establish a cordon and hold back the surge of the Palestinians by gunpoint. The dynamite team comes in and blows up the house, and then the bulldozers take over and remove all semblance of what had once been a home.

I stood there and watched a young boy, about eight or nine as he stared at his father and grandfather being restrained by gunpoint. I watched the boy turn to see the twisted looks of horror and sadness on the faces of his mother and grandmother. A dirty-faced toddler was screaming and reaching for his mother. The cold sullen looks on the men, the tearful lost looks of the women, and the mixed looks of terror and confusion on the children – deep penetrating looks – are looks I will never forget.

The Israelis may have exacted their revenge for a terrorist act, but I know, almost with certainty, that the Israelis planted a seed of retribution. That young boy, who witnessed the destruction of his home and saw the unforgettable looks of his parents and grandparents, will undoubtedly never forget that day. Consider the words of one journalist:

“The demolitions are acts of retaliation that strike deep into the core of Palestinian identity. They are bound to have some traumatic effect on children. In the short term, this devastation may quell opposition, but the long-term effects may be very different. People may become more embittered and hostile toward Israeli authority. Blowing up the home of a

family may in fact move the brothers and sisters of a dead man into closer identification with his actions.”¹

The heinous act of the Palestinian suicide bomber creates the same effect on the young brother or sister of that teenager blown to bits in a Jerusalem pizzeria; it plants the seed of retribution and revenge. God only knows if the seed will grow, but considering the climate, the conditions are ideal.

The Palestinians inculcate in their children at a very young age, hatred of the Israeli. I was assigned as a liaison officer in Amman, Jordan, and one day while shopping in the *souk* (market) in downtown Amman, I came across a child's game being sold. The game was the Palestinian version of the toddler game sold in America, called “Chutes and Ladders.” In the Palestinian version, the object is to reach the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. A picture of the Dome of the Rock appears at the top of the game board. At the bottom of the game board near the starting point, is a cartoon picture of a young boy in Palestinian *khafeeya*, (Palestinian headdress). He is holding an AK-47 rifle and lying prostrate under his foot is a soldier of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF). The soldier has an IDF helmet with the Star of David largely displayed on it. The soldier also has a large caricatured Jewish nose. The young Palestinian stands proud with his rifle in the nose of the Jew and his foot planted on the Jew's chest. In the game, each time the young Palestinian is victorious over the IDF, he gets to climb a ladder, and each time he is foiled by the IDF, he slides down a chute. You can see how, even in the very youngest of children, the Palestinians infuse hatred for the Israeli.

Have you ever tried to stop a fight and got caught in the middle, and thereby suffered some blows of your own? The U.S. risks getting more than a bloody nose in this blood feud, a blood feud aimed at getting revenge and settling scores

¹ “Demolishing More Than Just Palestinian Homes,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 5 April 1996.

from the past. How can we help stop the cycle of violence and retribution? Perhaps by plain, frank talk – we already actively and vigorously condemn the terrorist acts of suicide bombers (and rightly so), perhaps we need to just as vigorously condemn the demolition of Palestinian homes as well. At any rate – “A plague on both your houses!”

ONE MAN'S TERRORIST IS ANOTHER MAN'S PATRIOT

The Terrorist of Today May Be the Patriot of Tomorrow

The lesson in this essay is one of history's lessons. For that lesson, we go back to the British Mandate in Palestine in the early 1940s. The Zionist movement had developed three militant groups, 1) the Jewish Defense Force or militia of the *Haganah* (Hebrew for Defense, Haganah formed the basis for today's Israeli Army), 2) Menachem Begin's, *Irgun*, the underground military and terrorist wing of the Revisionist Zionists, and 3) *Lehi* (Hebrew acronym for *Lohana Herut Israel*: Fighters for the Freedom of Israel) founded by Avraham Stern and labeled the "Stern Gang," by the British (Avraham Stern was killed in 1942, but Yitzhak Shamir, who become the 7th Prime Minister of Israel, took over the reigns of Lehi). The three groups ran a spectrum from a militia self defense force to a radical all-out terrorist group.

In 1946, Lehi assassinated six British paratroopers in their beds. Initially, Menachem Begin deplored the methods of Lehi, but on 22 July 1946, after the British had arrested over 2,000 Zionists, Begin's Irgun organization blew up a wing of Jerusalem's King David Hotel killing 91 people. In 1947, following the British execution of three Zionist Terrorists, Begin's Irgun kidnapped and hung two British Army sergeants, and booby trapped their bodies.

In early 1948, fighting broke out between the Arabs and the Jews in Palestine. The Arab village of Deir Yassin had negotiated a non-aggression pact with adjacent Jewish settlements. When two Jewish settlements had been overrun by the Arabs, Irgun, and Lehi decided to take revenge. They attacked Deir Yassin.

Arab resistance proved too much for Irgun and Lehi alone, so they asked for help from the Haganah. Acting together the three groups subdued the village, but after Haganah's departure, Irgun and Lehi, began looting and massacring – over 250 men, women and children perished in the slaughter. According to one author: “Recently discovered personal testimonies of the leader of the operation reveal that the majority favored eliminating whoever stood in their way, including women and children, and proceeded to do so, murdering captured and wounded. Begin praised his killers for their humanity, for ‘acting in a way that no other fighting force had ever done...”¹

Deir Yassin has been extensively written about in many histories and commentaries on the birth of Israel. One Pulitzer Prize winning author writes:

“The Deir Yassin massacre, more openly discussed in Israel, has been researched extensively by historians with various perspectives. Since the killing was done by radical Jewish undergrounds and not by the mainstream Labor Zionists, the Israeli academic and political establishment has felt less need to suppress the basic story, although detailed evidence remains beyond public access.”²

The same author quotes Begin's congratulatory message to his Irgun troops:

“Accept my congratulations on this splendid act of conquest. Convey my regards to all the commanders and soldiers. We shake your hands. We are all proud of the excellent leadership and the fighting spirit in this great attack. We stand to attention in memory of the slain. We lovingly shake the hands of the wounded. Tell the soldiers: you have made history in Israel with your attack and your conquest. Continue thus until victory. As in Deir Yassin, so everywhere, we will attack and smite the enemy. God, God, Thou hast chosen us for conquest.”³

¹ Noam Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians*, (South End Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1983, 1999) p. 95.

² David K. Shipler, *Arab and Jew: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land*, (Penguin Books, New York, 1987) p. 37.

³ Quoted in Shipler, *ibid.*, p. 37.

Deir Yassin has become an “Alamo” for the Palestinians, and the controversy over the truth of what took place continues to this day (for more on Deir Yassin see Chapter 28, “The Problems of Palestine”).

In 1977, Menachem Begin became Prime Minister of Israel and eventually it is he along with Egypt’s Anwar Sadat who signed the famous peace treaty at Camp David.

Noam Chomsky has written how Israel honors former Israeli terrorists. He writes: “The Israeli Cabinet recently decided to issue a new series of stamps in memory of Zionist heroes, including Shlomo Ben-Yosef, who was hanged by the British for shooting at an Arab bus; the murderers of Lord Moyne in 1944; and two men ‘executed for their part in the 1955 Cairo security mishap’ – this a rather coy reference to the terrorist bombings (actually 1954) which were a ‘mishap’ in that the perpetrators were caught.”⁴ Chomsky is referring to the 1954 “Lavon Affair,” where an underground ring of Israeli saboteurs and spies had conducted terrorists operations in Egypt in an effort to discredit Nasser’s government. The group had exploded bombs in American and British property in Cairo and Alexandria in hopes that the Muslim Brotherhood would be blamed and Nasser’s government accused of being unable to control terrorism. The spy-saboteur ring was exposed when one of the members was caught trying to blow up a crowded theater in Cairo.

My point to think about: Today’s Terrorist May be Tomorrow’s Patriot.

⁴ Noam Chomsky, Op. Cit., p. 166.

Chapter 26

MUHAMMAD AHMED, (1845-1885): THE USAMA BIN LADIN OF HIS TIME?

Al- Mahdi and the Mahdist Revolt

On 26 January 1885, the besieged town of Khartoum fell to the Muslim forces of Muhammad Ahmed, known to his many thousands of followers as Al Mahdi, the expected one. Major General Charles George Gordon, known to many as “Chinese Gordon,” was killed and beheaded, and his death at the hands of the Mahdi’s forces led to the eventual fall of British Prime Minister Gladstone’s government.

Who was this Mahdi, this expected one, whose army of devout followers in 1884-1885 swept across the Sudan and declared their independence from Ottoman Egypt?

“He sprang from the mud of the Nile and, although he never strayed more than 200 miles from its banks, he successfully defied the might of Great Britain, then the most powerful nation on earth, carving for himself a million square miles from the sprawling Ottoman Empire and establishing the first and only African nation ever to win independence from a foreign power by virtue of its own force of arms, courage and abilities.”¹

Muhammad Ahmed ibn Abdullah, son of a poor but devout carpenter, was born in November of 1845 on a small island in the middle of the Nile, near Dongola, in what is now Sudan. Muhammad Ahmed was said to be a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad through his grandson Husayn, and in particular a

¹ Byron Farwell, *Prisoners of the Mahdi*, (W.W. Norton & Company, New York and London, 1989) p. 3.

descendant of the twelfth Imam of Shi'ah Islam, Muhammad Al-Askari, the expected one, the Shi'ite Mahdi.²

From an early age Muhammad Ahmed was more interested in spiritual things than the everyday happenings around his village and he immersed himself in Islam and the Qur'an. At the age of nine he had memorized the Qur'an. At sixteen he became a dervish and began to practice the dervish brand of Sufi mysticism. The devout Muhammad Ahmed became a respected spiritual leader and soon attracted many followers who despaired at the corrupt Ottoman-Egyptian rule and sought solace in Muhammad Ahmed's message. And that message was that Muslims must return to the glorious days and pure teachings of the Prophet, they must return to the fundamental doctrine of the Qur'an, "and a clearing away from it of the moss of myth, superstition and legend which over the centuries had come to obscure the words of the Prophet."³ He also, preached that the errant Egyptian and the wayward Ottoman Turk, had fallen away from Islam, and could no longer rightfully call themselves Muslims, and therefore were infidels. Consequently, it was the duty of all good and devout Muslims to conduct a jihad and drive out the oppressive infidels.

Muhammad Ahmed's following grew, and he gained a lieutenant, Abdullahi ibn Sayed Muhammad. In 1881, Muhammad Ahmed proclaimed himself the Mahdi, the expected one, the messiah. He gathered round him many of the regions important Sheikhs and tribal leaders and soon had a respected and feared army of followers. The Mahdi's followers called themselves "ansars (helpers or

² The Shi'ite Sect called "Twelvers." The Twelvers believe that the Twelfth *Imam* is not dead, but in a state of occultation. This Twelfth *Imam* will remain concealed until the time near the end of the world when Shi'ah Islam will be proclaimed supreme. When the Twelfth *Imam* emerges, he will be proclaimed the *Mahdi* or Messiah

³ Farwell, Op.Cit., p. 8.

partisans),” and wore a white dress-like garment called a jibba, with patches of yellow, red, green and black.

The Mahdi’s revolt spread up and down the Nile and swept the entire Sudan – his forces soon threatened the provincial capital of Khartoum.

Egypt at the time, was supposedly under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire, but in actuality was controlled by Great Britain. The British government under Prime Minister William Gladstone became concerned about British, European, Egyptian, and loyal Sudanese citizens in the city of Khartoum, and wanted to conduct an orderly withdrawal down the Nile to safer parts of Egypt. The government chose Major General Charles Gordon, who had at one time been the Egyptian Khedive’s Governor-General of the Sudan, and knew Khartoum and the surrounding country well.

In February 1884, Gordon arrived in Khartoum. Right away the local populace hailed Gordon as their savior; he would not only save Khartoum, but would destroy the Mahdi and his followers as well. For reasons that are not entirely clear, Gordon did not immediately conduct an evacuation of civilians and troops and soon found himself surrounded with almost all communication to the outside cutoff (Gordon was able, on occasion, to get messages out via a small Nile steamer).

The city of Khartoum lay under siege for eleven months, with the Mahdi tightening the noose around the city ever tighter as each day passed. In March 1885, Gordon requested help, and finally, after much prolonged debate, in October 1885, a British expeditionary force was sent up the Nile in hopes of relieving Khartoum. The relief force faced not only the obstacle of a great distance, but were hindered (and sometimes blocked) by the Mahdi’s forces every step of the way.

On 26 January 1885, the Mahdi struck. The Mahdi's dervish forces, including the fearsome Hadendowa⁴, stormed the city putting nearly all the inhabitants to the sword (the women of Khartoum were enslaved to be used as concubines for the Mahdi's loyal troops). They raced to the Governors Palace where Gordon had his headquarters, and soon swarmed into the courtyard and up onto the steps of the palace where legend has it that Gordon met his end.

On 28 January 1885, two Nile Steamers composing an advance column of the expeditionary relief force under the command of Colonel Sir Charles Wilson came within view of Khartoum. Drawing fire from the city and observing that the Egyptian flag was no longer flying from the palace, Wilson turned his steamers around. The relief effort came to an abrupt end. A telegraph was immediately dispatched. The words of the message, "Too late!" were splashed as headlines across every London newspaper and many newspapers on the continent. Gladstone and his government were blamed. The public outrage was enormous, eventually leading to the fall of Gladstone's government.

Just a few months (June 1885) after his victory, Muhammad Ahmed, the Mahdi died. Legend has it that the Mahdi had wanted Gordon as a prisoner, and when he was presented with Gordon's head, the Mahdi flew off in a rage. Abdullahi ibn Sayed Muhammad, had already been handpicked by the Mahdi as his successor or as the *Khalifa*, and he took charge of the ansar.

The Khalifa ruled the Sudan for nearly 14 years, until General Horatio Herbert Kitchener with a combined force of British and Egyptian soldiers defeated the Khalifa at the battle of Omdurman in September 1898. A battle that included one of the last great cavalry charges of the British Army, the charge of the 21st Lancers with a young Lieutenant Winston Churchill leading a troop on

⁴ The Hadendowa were a mixture of Arabic and Nubian stock who sported wild frizzy hairstyles. They were Rudyard Kipling's "Fuzzy-Wuzzys."

the right wing (Churchill had wangled his way to the Sudan as a newspaper correspondent and eventually was assigned to the 21st Lancers).

The Mahdi had become a legend. “He angered Queen Victoria, nearly toppled a British government, made Europeans his slaves, defeated the Egyptian army, and founded a religious cult. In an age of repeating rifles, artillery and machine guns, his warriors held back the forces of the civilized world for fourteen years with spears, swords and a determined barbaric fanaticism.”⁵

The fanaticism of Muhammad Ahmed’s dervishes lives on in radical fundamentalist groups such as Al Qa’ida. The message is much the same, return to Islam’s golden age, the time of the Prophet and his companions – those Muslims who have deviated from the Prophet’s true path can no longer call themselves Muslims, they are infidels and a jihad must be conducted to rid the entire world of the infidel.

Usama bin Ladin and Muhammad Ahmed really cannot be compared. Muhammad Ahmed was a learned religious man, respected as a cleric by his people. Usama bin Ladin has not had anywhere near a comparable religious training. Muhammad Ahmed led his troops in battle, bin Ladin hides in caves.

The lessons of history here are three – One: as we know, a group or society subjected by their rulers to long-standing wrongs and cruel oppression sooner or later will revolt, if the right charismatic leader takes charge. Two: radical Islam, can during times of severe repression, such as was seen in the Sudan of the 1880s, win over many converts – converts who, when fired with zeal, will hesitate at nothing to execute their mission. And finally, three: That, perhaps, history’s has cycles and repeats itself, and we are experiencing the same kind of confrontation with Islam that the British experienced. It is how we handle history’s lessons in

⁵ Farwell, *Op. Cit.*, p. 3.

the long run that will determine what is written in the next chapter of World history.

Chapter 27

FROM THE SHORES OF TRIPOLI TO THE SHARI'AH COURTS OF NIGERIA

Some Random Observations on Issues in the Current Global War on Terrorism

In this essay I offer a few random observations of some press and journal articles (12 March 2002).

America's First Armed Conflict with the Middle East

In an article in *The National Interest*, entitled, "Echoes from the Barbary Coast,"¹ Dr. Rand H. Fishbein discusses America's first armed encounter with the Middle East, the conflict with the Barbary States of Tripoli, Algiers, Morocco and Tunis over the piracy of American ships plying their trade off the Barbary Coast of the Mediterranean.

Just after American independence, Muslim Barbary Pirates began attacking American Merchant ships off the coast of North Africa, stealing the cargo, scuttling the ships, and holding American seaman for ransom or selling them into slavery. The Muslim rulers of the Barbary States, turned a "blind eye" to the pirates, offering them safe refuge in their ports and cities, and raking in some of the pirates plunder. As Fishbein states: "In the parlance of our time, however, this system of piracy was state-sponsored terrorism, pure and simple – an

¹ Rand H. Fishbein, "Echoes from the Barbary Coast," *The National Interest*, (Number 66, Winter 2001/02) pp. 47-51.

extortion racket in which the pirate, the petty states of North Africa and the Ottoman Empire were all complicit.”²

Initially Congress, in a diplomatic appeasement effort, offered to pay the Barbary States for protection. To keep the Muslim pirate’s corsairs in port, grand sums were paid to each of the state’s rulers. At first these sums worked, but soon each ruler demanded more, until America could no longer afford the enormous sums needed to protect our merchant fleet.

All this changed with the election of Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson immediately sent a squadron of frigates to the area. The ruler of Tripoli felt that America had neither the guts nor stamina to withstand a conflict so he declared war on the United States. For the next two years the U.S.S. *Constitution* and other ships shelled coastal fortresses, ports and harbors, and swept the Muslim corsairs from the sea. In 1805, the *Constitution* supported one of our earliest amphibious efforts, as Marines were landed on the shores of Tripoli. The American battle cry became, “millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute.”³ Jefferson’s policy worked, the Barbary States sued for peace. “Firm action and a determined policy had brought success in America’s first war with Middle Eastern terrorism.”⁴

The final point that Dr. Fishbein draws is that America’s technological edge helped win the war, but the deciding factor was America’s “persistence over defiance, steeled determination over opportunism...signature traits (that have) defined this nation since its inception.”⁵ This national signature trait of

² *ibid.*, p. 47.

³ Quoted in: *ibid.*, p. 49.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 49.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 50.

persistence and determination will serve us well in the current war on terrorism – if we hold true to our course.

When will the Cycle of Hatred, Violence and Bloodshed Stop?

The Israeli newspaper, *Ha'aretz*, on 30 January 2002, printed an article entitled, “The smile of policeman Agadi.” A Palestinian who spent time in an Israeli Shin Bet prison facility relates his painful experiences in the article. Here is part of his story:

“Finally, they let me go to the toilet. My body shook with cold. My hands were swollen and my body throbbed with pain. I fantasized about sleep, about free hands so I could scratch my nose, about looking for my mother.

In the Shin Bet facility where the good cop is the one who kicks the tray of food into the cell, and the bad cop is the one who shoves it into the hole that was the toilet, I could only fantasize about such things: and about descent respect; about an interrogation in which the interrogator doesn't curse, spit, kick, shake, torture.

But this time something that had never happened before took place. On my way to the toilet, weaving like a drunk, in a shaking, smashed body, I heard someone stammer, ‘What's happening to this guy. They've destroyed him.’ ”⁶

The Palestinian goes on and relates how the guard showed him some respect, offered him a cigarette, and smiled at him. He recounts how he saw the Israeli's nametag with Avraham Agadi printed on it, and how he would never forget the kindness of this one caring Israeli, how he still keeps Agadi's smile in his memory.

Agadi's simple act of kindness left such an impression that the Palestinian wrote:

⁶ “The smile of policeman Agadi,” *Ha'aretz*, 30 Jan 02 (www.haaretz.com)

“We can all live without torture, without terror, without car bombs, without assassinations. We can live here without one denying the right of the other to live. We can have a joint future, of equal rights, since we, the living, are more precious than the things we are fighting over; we have to give up racism, not democracy; give up fanaticism, not human rights. We can and should see the other side, not through the sniper’s scope or above the explosive belt. We must stop this ruthless cycle of bloodshed.”⁷

On 29 January 2002 *The Washington Post*, reported that 60 Israeli Army reservists refused to continue to serve in the West Bank and Gaza Strip because they believe that the Israeli occupation forces are “abusing and humiliating Palestinians.”⁸

On 30 January 2002, *Ha’aretz*, reported that the 50 Officers who refused to serve in the territories might be stripped of their commands and demoted.⁹

On 20 January 2002, *The Chicago Tribune*, reports that more than 200 innocent children have been killed in the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The reporter movingly personalizes the story, writing:

“Burhan Himuni 3, was sitting on his father’s lap in a car when it was hit by an Israeli missile. Koby Mandell 13, had skipped school to go for a hike with a pal when some Palestinian saw a murderous opportunity when he came upon them in the desert near Tekoa. Shalhevet Pass, 10 months, never knew her family lived among the controversial Jewish settlers in Hebron when the Palestinian sniper’s bullet hit her in the head. Faris Odeh, 14, was a daredevil who used to shimmy down the drain pipe to escape a grounding by his father; throwing stones at Israeli tanks was his last bit of mischief. Diya Tmeizi, 2 months, was a blessing to her parents after 10 years of infertility – before Jewish vigilantes sprayed their car with bullets outside Hebron.”¹⁰

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ Lee Hockstader, “Israeli Reservists Refuse Territories Duty,” *The Washington Post*, 29 January 2002, p. A16.

⁹ Amos Harel, “Officers’ letter may mean demotion,” *Ha’aretz*, 30 January 2002 (www.haaretz.com)

¹⁰ Hugh Delios, “Children trapped in Mideast violence,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 20 January 2002 (www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-0201200325jan20.story)

The *Chicago Tribune* reporter bluntly comments: “But if the slaughter and the killing of children of the last 15 months is not already the abyss, then it is hard to imagine what is. So far, the violence does not appear to have intimidated either side, instead fueling a blind, racist hatred that neither side’s leadership appears eager to quell.”¹¹

On 28 January 2002, *The Los Angeles Times*¹² (as well, as many other newspapers), reported some particularly disturbing news. A Palestinian woman had blown herself up in a suicide bombing, killing one person and wounding over 100. What makes this particularly disturbing, is that this is the first instance of a female acting as a suicide bomber, and demonstrates a new level of desperation for the Palestinians. The suicide bomber, Wafa Idriss, worked as a volunteer paramedic for the Red Crescent emergency medical service, and had, herself, been wounded several times by Israeli rubber bullets.

On 31 January 2002, *The Washington Post*, reports how the Palestinian’s praised the female suicide bomber and how the Israelis see the act as an increase in the threat, as a new level of peril. Trying to explain why Wafa Idriss, the female suicide bomber, would commit such an act, the article quotes a neighbor of the bomber: “Wafa’s work destroyed her psychologically,” said Mouna Abd Rabo, 28, a neighbor and former grade school classmate. “She told me one day, about four months ago, that the Israeli army had fired a tank shell and killed a person, and she had to collect the body parts in a bag. She hasn’t been a normal person

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² Mary Curtius, “Palestinian Kills Israeli and Herself With Bomb,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 28 January 2002, (www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-012802izpals.story)

since then. She felt so bad, she told me she wanted to do something to the Jews.”¹³

In 1993, Just before I left the United States for my tour of duty in the Middle East as a UN Military Observer (UNMO), I had a conversation with an Air Force Lieutenant Colonel who had served as an UNMO in the late 1980s, during the time when Marine Lieutenant Colonel William Higgins was kidnapped and killed.

The Air Force Lieutenant Colonel related to me a story about the nights he spent on Observation Post (OP) Duty along the Israeli-Lebanon border. One of the Observation Posts where UNMOs pulled duty was near an Israeli prison. The Lieutenant Colonel told me how at night he could hear terrible screams coming from the Israeli prison and when he asked his fellow UNMOs about the source of the screams, he was told it was Palestinians being tortured. Obviously, this is hearsay, but more than one UNMO who served in that OP told me similar stories. You hear enough rumors, enough hearsay and you begin to wonder if there is some truth in all the stories.

Is this really the 21st Century? You wouldn't think so in Israel today. The above stories demonstrate the extreme levels of desperation that have seized the people on both sides. How can the cycle of hatred, violence, and bloodshed be stopped? The vengeance and payback exacted daily by both the Israelis and the Palestinians seems to negate any reasonable chance of wisdom and understanding being applied. Can the US help? Can we act as impartial arbiters in this miasma of hell? Someone needs to.

¹³ Lee Hockstader, "Palestinians Hail a Heroine; Israelis See Rising Threat," *The Washington Post*, 31 January 2002, p. A20.

A Strange Parallel?

“The army has called the attacks a success...despite heavy casualties to...civilians. Well over 2,000...boys and men have been rounded up and screened, hundreds of small arms have been confiscated and a number of bomb- and rocket-making workshops have been discovered.

Almost uncontested, the invasion...was over in half an hour. When morning came, the ...soldiers ordered males ages 14 to 45 to come out of their homes with their hands over their heads. ‘Surrender peacefully and you will soon be returning to your homes in good health,’ the soldiers announced. ‘If not, you may be hurt.’

Some 600...boys and men said goodbye to their parents, wives and children, surrendered to the soldiers and were herded into a dust-choked stone quarry at the camp's edge to be handcuffed, interrogated and screened.”¹⁴

Is this perhaps an account of a German attack on a Jewish village in Poland or a section of the Warsaw Ghetto during the holocaust? No this is a recent (12 March 2002) *Washington Post* account of an Israeli attack on the Palestinian refugee camp of Deheishe, I have used ellipses for words removed such as Israeli or Palestinian, but you very well could substitute the words German and Jew. It is scary in a way, but the above account reads very much like contemporary accounts of the 1940s. Does history repeat itself in strange twists?

Nigeria and Islamic Shari’ah Courts Go Back to the Stone Age

The final article for this essay was published in *The New York Times*, on 27

¹⁴ Lee Hockstader, “Israeli Military Storms Refugee Camp in Gaza,” *The Washington Post*, 12 March 2002, p. A1.

January 2002.¹⁵ It deals with the case of a Nigerian woman accused of adultery. Many of the Islamic northern states of Nigeria have adopted the full use of Islamic Shari'ah law. The Qur'an as interpreted by Shari'ah law calls for stoning to death anyone guilty of adultery.

Sufiyatu Huseini was accused and convicted of adultery by an Islamic court in Sokoto, Nigeria. Sufiyato, who recently divorced her husband, was raped by a man from her village. She became pregnant. When her pregnancy began to show the police questioned her and she was taken to the police station with the man who had sex with her. At the station they admitted having sex (at the time she did not tell the police she was raped, as the man had said he loved her and would care for her and the child). Normal interpretation of Shari'ah law says that adultery can only be proved if someone confesses to it, or if four male witnesses see the act – but the more radical Maliki School of Shari'ah states that the pregnancy itself is sufficient evidence of adultery.

The court has ruled that the sentence will be carried out as soon as Sufiyatu has weaned her child. Once that happens she will be taken out and stoned to death by members of her village. The ruling is currently being appealed.

Again, is this really the 21st Century? Has half the world been enveloped in some twisted “time-warp,” and returned to the stone ages? Can the international community help? It should.

¹⁵ Richard Dowden, “Death by Stoning,” *The New York Times*, 27 January 2002, (www.nytimes.com/2002/01/27/magazine/27stoning.html)

Chapter 28

THE PROBLEMS OF PALESTINE

Issues Relating to the Current Israeli-Palestinian Crisis

The Land of the Philistines

In ancient times Palestine made up only a small area of land along the seacoast of Canaan. The Philistines inhabited this land, and in Hebrew the land was called Pelesheth or “Philistia,” land of the Philistines, from which comes the name Palestine. The Romans upon their occupation and conquest of the area began to call the entire land of Israel, Palestine – and in 135 AD, the Emperor Hadrian crushed the Second Jewish revolt, known as the Bar Kochba revolt. Hadrian enslaved the rebels who were not killed in the fighting and banned all Jews from entering Jerusalem (which he renamed Aleia Capitolina) on pain of death. He ploughed the Temple Mount with salt, and renamed the province Syria Palestina to further humiliate the Jews by naming the land after their former enemy, the Philistines. From then on, until 1948, the land was known as Palestine.

To the Jews the land is known as Eretz Yisrael, to the Arabs, Falastin or Palestine. Arabs have lived on the land since the Muslim conquest in 638 AD. The Muslims seized Palestine from the Christian Byzantine Empire, which had inherited control of the land from the Romans after the Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity. For a brief interval the land was ruled by a Christian King, when in 1100 the Crusaders established the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. The Christian rule was short lived, however, as Salah al-Din or Saladin, defeated the Crusaders at the Battle of Hattin and retook Jerusalem in 1187. Thereafter, there was a continuous Muslim rule, first by the Mamluks, then

by the Ottoman Turks until the start of the British Mandate at the end of the First World War.

After the rule of the Romans, the Jews of Israel were dispersed to the four corners of the globe in what is known as the Diaspora – but a small population of Jews remained in Palestine, existing under varying degrees of domination until the end of Ottoman rule. Jews and Christians under Muslim rule were considered *dhimmi*, or people of the book and so long as they paid a tax called *jizya*, both Jews and Christians were allowed full rights to practice their religion and received the protection of Muslim rulers. The degree of treatment of the Jews varied under different rulers, but for the most part, the Jews were allowed to worship as they pleased and often were far better off than their counterparts in Europe and other parts of the world. Certainly the treatment of the Jews by the Christian Crusaders during the conquest of Jerusalem in 1099 (when the Crusaders massacred all Muslims and Jews – men, women, and children) was considerably more egregious than Muslim treatment. According to one medieval eyewitness account of the Crusaders: “...the slaughter was so great that our men waded in blood up to their ankles.”¹

Palestine has been a land subject to turmoil and tragedy for thousands of years. A conflict of retribution and vengeance rages there today. A conflict that the Arab and Islamic world regards as the single most important issue in what many would call a West versus Islam clash of civilizations.² Indeed one Middle East scholar has labeled the Israeli-Palestine problem as viewed by the Muslim world as, “The central issue...the bellwether of United States policy for so many

¹ August C. Krey, *The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eyewitnesses and Participants*, (Princeton: 1921), pp. 256-57, quotation and source found at: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/cde-jlem.html>

² For percentages of Middle East audiences surveyed see, Sara Roy, “Why Peace Failed: An Oslo Autopsy,” *Current History*, Vol 101, No. 651, January 2002, p.8.

Muslims is the Arab-Israel conflict.”³ In a recently completed Gallup Poll conducted in the Middle East, an overwhelming majority of Muslims view the United States unfavorably. They see the U.S. as: “ruthless, aggressive, conceited, arrogant, easily provoked, biased,” and have “significant grievances with the West in general and the United States in particular.”⁴ Most Middle East scholars and authorities agree that the Israeli-Palestinian question is the principal burning issue that inflames Muslim sensibilities and creates fiery passions and deep animosities. How did this state of affairs come about? A review of history starting with the First World War in the Middle East will give us a solid background into issues relating to the current crisis.

Reckless Promises

At the beginning of the First World War, when the Ottoman Empire sided with Germany, Great Britain had promised Arab leaders independence and the creation of Arab states if the Arabs would fight alongside the British in an effort to defeat the Turks. At the same time T.E. Lawrence or “Lawrence of Arabia,” was fighting with the Arabs against the Turks, Great Britain made another promise. That promise was contained in the “Balfour Declaration” of 1917, named after its progenitor, British Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour. The Balfour Declaration was a pledge to the Jews to establish a national home for the Jewish people, the Diaspora, in Palestine. There was yet another promise made earlier by the British – a promise to France, an assurance contained in a secret accord to carve up the Middle Eastern Ottoman lands into two separate spheres of influence, one for Great Britain and one for France – this promise was the Sykes-Picot Agreement of January 1916. Because of the Sykes-Picot Agreement,

³ Augustus Richard Norton, “America’s Approach to the Middle East: Legacies, Questions, and Possibilities,” *Current History*, Vol 101, No. 651, January 2002, p.6.

⁴ Andrea Stone, “In Poll, Islamic World Says Arabs Not Involved In 9/11,” *USA Today*, 27 February 2002, p. 1.

the Balfour Declaration became a promise involving a dual motive in creating a Jewish homeland in Palestine. As one writer suggests, the Balfour Declaration was a promise:

“...made because the British wanted to escape from yet another promise they had made – to France – that Palestine would be placed under international control. American control had also been considered. But British officials, looking back on the rapid Turkish advance in 1914 through Palestine to the Suez canal, decided that this narrow roadway was too vital to British imperial interests to be left in international hands or those of foreigners. A way had to be found to escape from the various undertakings and to keep Palestine British. To this end the Zionist movement proved convenient. The Zionists wanted a home, the British wanted a defence post astride the road to Suez.”⁵

With the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the Arabs asked for their promised independence, but did not get all of what they had bargained for. Sharif Hussein, who controlled the Arab holy cities of Mecca and Medina, received the Hijaz region along the western coast of Arabia by the Red Sea. Abd al-Aziz al-Saud retained control of the remainder of the Arabian Peninsula. Sharif Hussein's son, the Emir Faisal, was given Syria, but only ruled in Damascus for about 20 months, when the French unceremoniously threw him out. To placate the Arabs, the British then gave Faisal the rule of the Mesopotamia (Iraq) and gave Faisal's brother, Abdullah, the newly created Kingdom of Transjordan. The British retained control of Palestine and the French kept Syria and Lebanon.

The British Mandate

After the Versailles peace conference, the League of Nations entrusted the territories and former colonies of the Ottoman Empire and Germany to the provisional care of a “mandatory.” For Palestine that “mandatory” was Great Britain. On 24 July 1922, a League of Nations Council endorsed the British Mandate over Palestine, and the entire League of Nations ratified it under the

⁵ Brian Lapping, *End of Empire*, (St. Martin's Press, New York, 1985), pp. 105-106.

Treaty of Lausanne in September 1923.⁶ As a mandatory, both Britain and France were supposedly required to secure the development and welfare of the subject peoples ultimately leading to self-government, this was a requirement of all the mandates – except Palestine, the requirement here being to establish a Jewish national home.⁷

The population of the British Mandate at the time was 90 percent Arab, but Jewish immigration had begun in earnest. The British endeavored, sometimes successfully, and sometimes not so, to balance the interests of both Arab and Jew, but it was like walking a burning tightrope.

A variety of factors (unemployment, a severe draught, rising Jewish immigration), led to a major Arab revolt from 1936-1939. When the revolt was finally brought under control, the frustrated British government began to think in terms of a partition. A commission under Lord Peel, recommended the division of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. The British soon found that neither side, Arab or Jew could agree to any separation – as it stood any division would require moving great numbers of people off their lands, especially the Arabs. And the British discovered that they would face a violent resistance if any Arabs were forcibly removed from their lands. The plans for partition were abandoned.

During the wartime years, because of Nazi persecution, Jewish immigration increased significantly. The Arabs began to feel squeezed by the growing numbers of Jewish settlers. Sporadic violence broke out on both sides. Because of Britain's failure to totally adopt the Arab point of view in Palestine, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, aligned himself with Nazi Germany and began to recruit Arabs for the German Army.

⁶ See, e.g., Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001*, (Vintage Books, Random House, New York, 1999, 2001) p. 104.

⁷ See, e.g., Lapping, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 107-108.

The Politics of Terror and the End of the Mandate

With the end of the Second World War in Europe and the Holocaust, Palestine saw a dramatic increase in immigration. Feeling Arab pressures, Britain felt compelled to curtail the numbers of Jews into Palestine, but heart-wrenching stories like the saga of the *Exodus*, the memory of Nazi concentrations camps, and accounts of crowded Jewish refugee camps in Palestine, led to a rising rebellion among the Jews. The Zionists formed underground movements and soon acts of terror became a method for certain elements of the Zionists to get their message out. Three Zionist militant groups emerged, 1) the Jewish Defense Force or militia of the *Haganah* (Hebrew for Defense, Haganah formed the basis for today's Israeli Defense Force), 2) Menachem Begin's, *Irgun*, the underground military and terrorist wing of the Revisionist Zionists, and 3) *Lehi* (Hebrew acronym for *Lohana Herut Israel*: Fighters for the Freedom of Israel) founded by Avraham Stern and labeled the "Stern Gang," by the British (Avraham Stern was killed in 1942, but Yitzhak Shamir, who become the 7th Prime Minister of Israel, took over the reigns of Lehi). The three groups presented a spectrum from a militia self defense force to a radical all-out terrorist group.

The Jewish terrorists blew up bridges, attacked British Army convoys and military camps, destroyed railways, and killed British soldiers. In 1946 Lehi assassinated six British paratroopers sleeping in their beds. On 22 July 1946 in retribution for the British arrest of over 2,000 Zionists, Menachem Begin's Irgun organization blew up a wing of Jerusalem's King David Hotel killing 91 people (41 Arabs, 28 British, 17 Jews, and 5 others).⁸ In 1947, following the British execution of three Zionist Terrorists, Begin's Irgun kidnapped and hung two British Army sergeants, and booby trapped the area on the ground around the bodies, so that anyone attempting to take down the bodies, would be killed. Still,

⁸ See Brian Lapping, *Op. Cit.*, p. 126.

British forces continued to turn away Jewish refugees who came from the concentration camps.

On 29 November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the U.N. Partition Plan (U.N. Resolution 181), supported by the United States and the Soviet Union. The plan called for separate states within Palestine for the Jews and the Arabs as well as internationalization of Jerusalem. The Arabs rejected the plan, they were disheartened – they could not understand “why 37 percent of the population had been given 55 percent of the land.”⁹

After the passing of U.N. Resolution 181, fighting broke out in early 1948 between the Arabs and the Jews in Palestine. An Arab village named Deir Yassin occupied a strategic point on the western edge of Jerusalem, lying by the main road from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. The elders of Deir Yassin had negotiated a non-aggression pact with adjacent Jewish settlements. The Jewish militia force of Haganah wanted to attack another strategically located Arab village, al-Kastel and asked the commanders of Irgun, and Lehi to help out. Irgun and Lehi, however, decided on another action – they attacked Deir Yassin. According to some sources, the Jews tried to warn the villagers with a loudspeaker truck, but the truck got stuck in a ditch and the warning was never heard.

Taking heavy casualties Irgun and Lehi found Arab resistance strong – too much for Irgun and Lehi alone, so they asked for help from the Haganah. Acting together the three groups subdued the village, but after Haganah’s departure, Irgun and Lehi, began looting and massacring – over 250 men, women and children perished in the slaughter.¹⁰ Israeli Professor and Historian, Benny Morris writes: “Whole families were riddled with bullets and grenade fragments

⁹ Benny Morris, *Op. Cit.*, p. 186.

¹⁰ The number varies, some sources list the figure at above 300 and others list it as only 90.

and buried when houses were blown up on top of them; men, women, and children were mowed down as they emerged from houses; individuals were taken aside and shot. At the end of the battle, groups of old men, women, and children were trucked through West Jerusalem's streets in a kind of 'victory parade' and then dumped in (Arab) East Jerusalem."¹¹

It has been said that the battle and numbers killed at Deir Yassin was used as propaganda by both sides. Irgun and Lehi did not deny the high number of deaths, because they wanted the fight to strike terror into other Arab villages. The Arabs used the high number as a rallying cry and as an indictment of Jewish atrocities. Shortly after Deir Yassin, significant numbers of Arabs began to abandon their villages and to leave the disputed areas of Palestine. Perhaps the real number or the real facts will never be known. What is known is that Deir Yassin has become a sort of "Alamo" for the Palestinian people, a time and a place to be remembered for the Zionist terrorist's merciless slaughter of brave innocent Arabs.

A few days after the attack, in an early action of tit-for-tat retribution (the likes of which carries on to this day), Arab militia exacted their revenge for Deir Yassin. Arab fighters from Jerusalem and surrounding villages ambushed a convoy of non-combatants (mostly doctors, and nurses) on their way to the hospital at the campus of the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus. Seventy Jews were killed – an act that continues a legacy for retributive violence that has been passed from generation to generation of both Arab and Jew.¹²

¹¹ Benny Morris, Op. Cit., p. 208.

¹² See, ibid., p. 209.

The Birth of the State of Israel and the First Arab-Israeli War

After the terror of Deir Yassin, and the expansion of the use of force by the Jews, Arabs began a large-scale exodus from their homes and villages to areas they believed safe. The Jews used the slaughter at Deir Yassin as propaganda, and it greatly helped the other psychological methods that were being used to accelerate the flight of the Arabs. A former Israeli military commander describes:

“I gathered all the Jewish mukhtars, who have contact with Arabs in different villages, and asked them to whisper in the ears of some Arabs, that a great Jewish reinforcement has arrived in Galilee and that it is going to burn all the villages of the Huleh. They should suggest to these Arabs, as their friends, to escape while there is still time. And the rumour spread in all the areas of the Huleh that it is time to flee. The flight numbered myriads. The tactic reached its goal completely. The building of the police station at Halsä fell into our hands without a shot. The wide areas were cleaned, the danger was taken away from the transportation routes and we could organize ourselves for the invaders along the borders, without worrying about the rear.”¹³

According to the United Nations, the terror and psychological strategies worked – by the end of 1949 about 726,000 refugees, “half the indigenous population of Palestine,” spilled into the nearby countries of Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt.¹⁴

With the success of their fighters and strategic areas secured under Jewish control, the Jewish leaders felt confident that they had a good chance of survival.

¹³ Yigal Allon, *Ha Spher Ha Palmach*, cited in David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch*, (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1977), p. 130. Quotation and source found at: http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa/qpal/dpr/DPR_pp_2.htm

¹⁴ *U.N. Conciliation Commission for Palestine: Report of the United Nations Economic Survey Mission*, document A/AC.25/6, p. 19. http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa/qpal/dpr/DPR_pp_2.htm

On the 14th of May 1948, in Tel Aviv, David Ben-Gurion declared independence thus establishing the state of Israel. President Truman and the United States immediately recognized the new state. The next day, the 15th of May, the last of the British troops departed. On the quayside at Haifa harbor, the British Union Jack was lowered for the last time over what was once the British Mandate of Palestine.

At the same time the British were lowering the Union Jack, four Arab armies massed against the new state of Israel – troops from Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Transjordan, as well as several thousand Iraqi soldiers, combined in the “Arab League’s” attack on the Jews of Palestine. In a little over a month, the Israelis stopped the Egyptian Army. The Syrian, Lebanese, and Iraqi troops found they were no match for the Jewish forces (many were veterans of Jewish units that had served with the British Army in the Second World War) and were halted and then pushed back. The only Arab troops to put up a good fight were the troops of Transjordan’s Arab Legion, commanded by a British Officer, General John Bagot Glubb, known as “Glubb Pasha.” The Arab Legion’s elite, well-trained soldiers advanced and captured the West Bank area of Palestine and a large section of East Jerusalem – in particular the Jewish Quarter and the Temple Mount area in the Old City.

The Arab armies’ invasion was doomed from the start:

“There was no political agreement about the goals of the war; there was no unity of military command, agreed military aims, or operational procedures and timetables; and there was no political-military coordination. ...The Arabs had done no proper planning or intelligence work, logistics were in a shambles, armaments and ammunition were in piteously short supply. Officers and soldiers alike were unprepared for what faced them – a tenacious enemy, well dug in, superior to them in organization and numbers, and soon to be better equipped.”¹⁵

¹⁵ Benny Morris, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 219-220.

Before the end of the fighting there was one controversial battle that still reverberates and rankles in the Palestinian collective mind – the capture of the villages of Lydda and Ramla and the subsequent forced expulsion of over 50,000 Palestinians¹⁶.

Israeli soldiers under the commands of Yigal Allon, Yitzhak Rabin, and Moshe Dayan were to secure the sector containing the two villages from forces of the Transjordan Arab Legion. The Israelis expected heavy resistance, but the Arab Legion commander, “Glubb Pasha,” found his troops’ positions untenable and departed the area. The Israelis encountered light opposition and took the two villages. On 12 July 1948, elements of the Arab Legion tried to re-enter the village of Lydda to conduct a reconnaissance. They found the village occupied by Israeli troops. Fighting again broke out. Israeli Historian Benny Morris writes: “Some of the locals joined in the ensuing firefight, sniping at the Israelis. The jittery troops responded harshly, massacring young men detained in the mosque compound, and shooting indiscriminately into houses; ‘at least 250’ of the townspeople died, according to Palmah records.”¹⁷

Allon and Rabin had asked Ben-Gurion what to do with the over 50,000 Palestinians, and Ben-Gurion is reported to have replied, “Drive them out!”¹⁸ The Palestinians were force-marched from the villages, like sheep being led to slaughter; they choked the dusty roads for miles.

¹⁶ Israeli Professor Benny Morris cites the figure for both Lydda and Ramla at 60,000, see, e.g., *ibid.*, p. 257; Ahron Bregman and Jihan El-Tahri cite the figure at 50,000, see, e.g., Ahron Bregman and Jihan El-Tahri, *Israel and the Arabs: An Eyewitness Account of War and Peace in the Middle East*, (TV Books, New York, 2000) p. 45.

¹⁷ Morris, *Op. Cit.*, p. 240. The “Palmah” was an elite strike-force of the Jewish Defense Force Haganah.

¹⁸ Ahron Bregman and Jihan El-Tahri, *Israel and the Arabs: An Eyewitness Account of War and Peace in the Middle East*, (TV Books, New York, 2000) p. 44.

International pressure was being applied to Israel to allow the Palestinians to return to their homes, but in a cabinet meeting discussing the issue, Ben-Gurion stated: “War is war. We did not start the war. They did. Do we have to allow the enemy back so it could make war against us? They lost and fled and I will oppose their return also after the war.”¹⁹ To this day, the Palestinian right of return is a stubborn sticking point to a final Palestinian-Israeli peace settlement.

On May 20th of 1948, the United Nations had appointed the Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte as a special mediator to try and end the conflict. Count Bernadotte did manage to gain a cease-fire truce between the Arabs and Israelis for a short period in June, but the fighting resumed in early July of 1948. Bernadotte again tried to put forward another peace proposal in September of 1948, but was assassinated by the Jewish terrorist group Lehi. Both Jewish terrorist groups, Irgun and Lehi, were disbanded or subsumed into the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) in September of 1948 following the politically motivated murder of Bernadotte.²⁰

Realizing the futility of further action, the four Arab nations adjoining Israel began, one-by-one, to sign armistice agreements. Egypt signed an armistice agreement on 24 February 1949, Lebanon on 23 March, Jordan signed on 3 April, and finally Syria signed on 20 July 1949. Israel had won the first Arab-Israeli war, but had achieved an uneasy peace.

Israel had managed to gain some areas that were not part of the original partition plan, namely, Lydda, Ramla, and Beer Sheva. Egypt now controlled the small strip of land along the Mediterranean called the Gaza Strip, and Jordan’s King Abdullah annexed the West Bank and East Jerusalem as part of the

¹⁹ Bregman and El-Tahri, *ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

²⁰ See, Morris, *Op. Cit.*, p. 237.

Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The Palestinians were left out in the cold, and a teeming mass of them, who had once basked in the sun in their own olive groves, orchards, farms and villages, now baked in the sun amid the crowded squalor of numerous refugee camps.

The peace that Israel had achieved was indeed uneasy, as almost immediately after the armistice signings, groups of Arab “infiltrators,” and *fedayeen* (self-sacrificers) began small-scale attacks on towns and villages within Israel. One such attack occurred on the night of October 12, 1953. That night a grenade was tossed into a house in the village of Yehud, east of Tel Aviv, killing an Israeli mother and her two young children. “Israel immediately authorized a retaliatory commando raid on the village of Qibya in Jordan, led by a young commander, Ariel Sharon. The Qibya raid left sixty-nine people dead. News of this disproportionate reprisal unleashed an international outcry.”²¹ Professor Morris writes: “Sharon and the IDF subsequently claimed the villagers had hidden in cellars and attics and the troops had been unaware of this when they blew up the buildings. But in truth the troops had moved from house to house, firing through windows and doorways, and Jordanian pathologists reported that most of the dead had been killed by bullets and shrapnel rather than from falling masonry or explosions.”²² Revenge raids, retaliatory strikes, assassinations and reprisals continue to this day.

²¹ Bregman and El-Tahri, *Op. Cit.*, p. 55.

²² Morris, *Op. Cit.*, p. 278. For an additional account of the raid on Qibya, see: David K. Shipler, *Arab and Jew: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land*, (Penguin Books, New York, 1987), pp. 45-46.

War Again: The Suez Crisis

The President of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser (Nasser was a Major in the Egyptian Army during the humiliating defeat by the Israelis in 1948) on 26 July 1956, nationalized the Suez Canal. Great Britain and France were apoplectic. They quickly put their heads together in a plot to set in motion acts that led to the Suez Crisis, and another Arab-Israeli war. The British and the French found that they could not abide Egyptian control of the canal. For both nations the canal was a vital strategic chokepoint for shipments of much needed oil. Together they contrived a plan with Israel to regain control of the canal. The scheme involved an Israeli attack on Egypt with Great Britain and France intervening to separate the two warring parties. In the process Great Britain and France would take control of the canal and oust Nasser, who they felt was becoming too buddy-buddy with the Soviets.

On 29 October 1956, Israel launched an offensive that would sweep their armor across the Sinai and up to the canal. On 5 November, with the Israelis firmly in control of the Sinai Peninsula, Britain and France executed their part of the plan, dropping paratroopers at the northern entrance to the Suez Canal at Port Said. From Port Said the combined Anglo-French forces were to thrust south towards the city of Suez and once captured would have full control of the canal.

The United States and the Soviet Union placed enough diplomatic pressures and threats on the tripartite union of France, Britain and Israel that the invasion came to a halt. The United Nations Security Council had called for a cease-fire and the allied move south ended abruptly on 7 November 1956. The Israelis stopped any further fighting, but still retained control of the Sinai. Menacing threats from the Soviet Union, diplomatic pressures of the U.S. and the U.N. finally convinced Israel to completely withdraw from the Sinai in March of 1957.

England and France had been humiliated in the international community and their relations with the Arab world had suffered grave harm. Both the U.S. and Soviet stock had risen in the Arab world, the U.S. was beginning to take the role previously held by Britain and France as the protector of Western interests in the region, and the Soviets gained additional markets for Soviet arms. Israel had only served to deepen the Arab world's enmity towards the Jewish State.²³

Eleven years of uneasy peace followed, with Arab governments seeking a method of giving the Palestinians a voice in the conflict. In January 1964 the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was created. The Arab governments who created the PLO intended for the organization to march to their orders, but Yassar Arafat and his Fatah movement gained the chairmanship of the PLO in 1969, and established PLO autonomy.

The 1967, Six Day War

Part of the agreement for the Israelis to withdraw from the Sinai after the Suez Crisis, was that Egypt and Nasser would allow the Israelis freedom of navigation in the Straits of Tiran. The Straits of Tiran are located at the end of the Gulf of Aqaba and are narrows that form between the tip of the Sinai Peninsula near Sharm el Sheikh and the Island of Tiran off the northwestern coast of Saudi Arabia. Israel had established a port at Eilat (captured from the Palestinians in the 1948 war when it was known as Um Rash-Rash), on the Gulf of Aqaba and Israeli shipping depended on free access to the Red Sea through the Straits of Tiran.

In early May of 1967, Nasser was briefed on the substance of a Soviet Intelligence Report that said that Israel was massing troops along the border with Syria. Nasser had been embarrassed once before when Israeli troops had

²³ For a detailed account of the Suez Crisis see, e.g., Morris, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 289-301.

conducted operations against the Syrians and Nasser had failed to come to the Syrians aid. Nasser's honor had been questioned in April of 1967 – he was criticized for not protecting Syria when the Israeli Air Force (IAF) shot down six Syrian MiGs. Nasser had a mutual defense pact with the Syrians and he did not want to be cast in a bad light again. Nasser mobilized two Egyptian divisions, which crossed the Suez Canal and joined another division already in place in the Sinai desert. The Soviet report turned out to be false, but Nasser's movement of troops into the Sinai set in motion forces that could not be easily stopped.

The movement of the Egyptian divisions into the Sinai worried the Israelis and they began to talk of mobilization as a precautionary measure. President Nasser made the next move. Knowing that the impact of his actions most probably would mean war, Nasser announced a blockade of the Straits of Tiran.

On 23 May 1967 the Israeli cabinet ordered full mobilization. At about the same time, President Nasser sent an Egyptian delegation to Moscow – Egypt was critically dependent on their arms merchant, the Soviet Union. Moscow was nervous, and told Egypt that if Egypt struck first, they could not depend on Soviet help, Egypt would have to go it alone.²⁴

On 5 June 1967 in the wee hours of the morning, the Israeli Air Force was preparing to launch the fleet in a preemptive strike to catch the Egyptian's unawares. The time of the strike had been designated as 0745. Israeli aircraft took off, flew low over the Mediterranean and then desert dunes to avoid Egyptian radars, suddenly popped up over their targets and completely caught the Egyptians by surprise. The Egyptian Air Force was destroyed on the ground. Without air cover the Egyptian forces in the Sinai were doomed.

²⁴ Bregman and El-Tahri, Op. Cit., pp. 96-98.

In an effort to save his troops, Nasser ordered a withdrawal from the Sinai, but the withdrawal became a full-scale retreat. Israeli armored columns raced across the Sinai to the Suez Canal. The Egyptians lost 2,000 soldiers fighting the Israelis and 10,000 more were killed in the retreat.²⁵ It was a humiliating, catastrophic defeat for Egypt.

Not only did Israel defeat Egypt, but the forces of King Hussein of Jordan and the Syrians as well. Israel had captured East Jerusalem and the area known as the West Bank from Jordan – they had taken the strategic Golan Heights from Syria, and they now controlled the Gaza Strip. At 6:30 P.M. on Saturday, 10 June 1967 a cease-fire was achieved.

The battlefield acquisition of territory doubled the area of land controlled by Israel. The rapid, astounding victory placed tiny Israel on a pedestal and proclaimed an era of self-assurance and optimism among Israelis and their supporters. And again, the Arab and Muslim world experienced shame and dishonor at having suffered another *nakba* or disaster.

The United Nations issued Security Council Resolution 242, stressing “the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war.” The resolution called for Israel to withdraw its armed forces from the areas it had taken in the war. Resolution 242 additionally affirmed the necessity, “for achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem,” as the fighting had displaced another estimated 500,000 Palestinians.²⁶

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 107.

²⁶ See, <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa/ngo/history.html>

The 1973 Yom Kippur War

Gamal Abdel Nasser, died of a heart attack on 28 September 1970, and his Vice-President Anwar Sadat assumed the role of President and leader of the Egyptian nation. Almost immediately upon taking power, Sadat sought to court the friendship of the United States and rid his government of the need to have the Soviets as allies.

On 4 February 1971, in a speech to the Egyptian Parliament, Anwar Sadat amazed the world. He said: “If Israel withdraws her forces in Sinai to the Passes (*the Giddi and Mitla passes on the western edge of the Sinai*) I will be willing to reopen the Suez Canal, have my forces cross to the East Bank, ...make a solemn official declaration of a cease-fire, restore diplomatic relations with the United States, and sign a peace agreement with Israel.”²⁷ Israel under Prime Minister Golda Meir rejected Sadat’s proposal.

Sadat had started secret talks with the U.S., but the U.S. was initially suspicious and unbelieving of Sadat’s intentions. In an effort to convince the Americans, in July of 1972, Sadat expelled the Soviet advisors in Egypt. Sadat was desperately trying to gain assistance in getting Israel to withdraw from the Sinai and return Egypt’s land. The United States was still not convinced of Sadat’s motives and Henry Kissinger rejected Sadat’s initial plans to garner an agreement with Israel. Kissinger had suggested a step-by-step method such as Egypt making the first move of opening up the Suez Canal, but Sadat wanted nothing less than dramatic action – Israel’s withdrawal and then Egypt’s acceptance of a peace agreement.

Sadat now decided to take drastic measures – attack Israel and perhaps force the Israelis to the negotiating table. Sadat and his military commanders keep the plan secret and cleverly developed some deception plans. Between 1972 and

²⁷ Bregman and El-Tahri, *Op. Cit.*, p. 130.

1973 the Egyptian army mobilized twenty-two times for several days. Forces would be put in place for four to five days then stood down and returned to garrison. This drove the Israelis mad. At first the Israelis counter-mobilized to meet the Egyptian threat, but seeing the Egyptians stand down after a few days, the Israelis decided it was not cost effective to mobilize each time the Egyptians did. The ruse worked, the twenty-third mobilization was for real and completely caught the Israelis off-guard.²⁸

The Egyptians chose 6 October 1973, the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, which was a day most Israelis would be either at Synagogue or at home resting. It was also Ramadan for the Egyptians, a time of fasting, and a time that Israel perhaps would not expect an attack.

At 1400 on 6 October, Egyptian troops using water canon breached the sand barriers along the east bank of the Suez Canal and penetrated the Bar-Lev line. Israel was completely taken by surprise.

Initially, Egypt and Syria pressed forward in the Sinai and the Golan Heights, advancing steadily, but these advances were soon reversed by Israel – with well trained troops and better armor, Israel pushed the Egyptians back across the Sinai and broke through to the canal. Elements of Israel's army crossed the canal and threatened to move on Cairo. The United Nations stepped in and called for an immediate cease-fire. The U.N. issued Security Council Resolution Number 338 which called upon both parties to “cease all firing and terminate all military activity immediately...to start immediately after the cease-fire the implementation of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) in all its parts...and concurrently with the cease-fire, negotiations shall start between the parties concerned under

²⁸ See, ibid., p. 139.

appropriate auspices aimed at establishing a just and durable peace in the Middle East.”²⁹

To most of the world President Anwar Sadat and Egypt had lost a war. But Egypt regarded it as a victory; they had surprised the Israelis, crossed the Suez and won an important battle, the battle of regaining Arab self-respect and pride. Anwar Sadat did lose the 1973 Yom Kippur war, but he gained an enormous measure of esteem and honor among the Arab world.

Egypt and Israel Sign a Peace Treaty

After the Yom Kippur War, the President of Egypt, Anwar Sadat, believed he stood in a better position to negotiate with the Israelis for a peace between Egypt and Israel and a return of Egyptian lands captured in the 1967 war. Although Sadat’s army had been defeated, Egypt had shown considerable pluck in their surprise attack on Israel. During the first few days of the war the Egyptians had driven back the Israeli army. At the very least, Sadat had won himself a measure of respect among the rest of the Arab world. He was the leader of an Arab country who had defied Israel and Israeli supporters. Sadat had conducted a surprise attack and caught the celebrated Israeli army with its pants down.

In early November 1977 in an address to the Egyptian Parliament, Anwar Sadat stated: “I am ready to go to the end of the world, to their own homes, even to the Knesset in search for peace.”³⁰ Sadat’s speech shocked the Arabs and surprised the rest of the world. His remarks were an undisguised overture of peace directed towards Israel. The news media reported Sadat’s speech and CBS correspondent Walter Cronkite was granted an exclusive interview with Sadat. Running with the spontaneity of the moment, Cronkite then called Israel’s media

²⁹ See, <http://www.un.org/documents/sc/res/1973/s73r338e.pdf>

³⁰ Bregman and El-Tahri, Op.Cit., p. 153.

advisor and asked if he could get an interview with Menachem Begin, Israel's Prime Minister. Begin granted the interview. Diplomatic channel wires flashed and U.S. President, Jimmy Carter arranged an invitation from the Israeli government for a visit to Israel by Sadat.

On 19 November 1977 Anwar Sadat's aircraft landed in Tel Aviv, and the next day, 20 November 1977, Sadat addressed the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset. The speech was a tough one for the Israelis, containing challenges and concessions the Israelis did not believe they could address, but Sadat had courageously placed one foot forward on the road to peace.

President Jimmy Carter invited Begin and Sadat to a peace summit at Camp David, and on 17 September 1978 the Camp David Accords were signed. The deal was land for peace; Egypt would sign a peace agreement with the Israelis in response for an Israeli return of the Sinai Peninsula. The Camp David Accords were the foundations for the final peace treaty that was signed on 26 March 1979. Anwar Sadat again believed he had won a victory for Egypt, but it was a victory for which he ultimately gave his life.

On 6 October 1981 while reviewing a military parade that celebrated Egypt's bold attack in the 1973 war, a group of Muslim extremist soldiers, participating in the parade, ran up to the reviewing stand, pulled out machine guns and opened fire killing Sadat. On 25 April 1982, Israel withdrew the last remnants of its settlements from the Sinai – it was the final act in the “land for peace” deal, a deal brought about by the efforts of Anwar Sadat, but one in which he would never see the finale.

Israel Invades Lebanon

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had been actively conducting border raids and attacks on Israeli settlements since the mid 1960s. After the Six Day War of 1967 the raids and attacks intensified. The PLO, under the direction of its Chairman, Yassar Arafat, conducted these raids from Jordan, subjecting King Hussein's Hashemite Kingdom to Israeli retaliation. The PLO splinter group, the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), headed by George Habash was spreading dissent in Amman. The PFLP's unabashed Marxist-Leninist dogma and dislike for King Hussein rankled Jordan's loyal and conservative military. Tired of Israeli retaliations and the hubris of the Palestinians strutting about Amman, the Jordanian Army struck. A full-scale war broke out between the Palestinians and the Jordanian Military. Syria sent tanks across the border to aid the Palestinians, but international pressures forced them to withdraw. King Hussein finally overwhelmed the Palestinians and expelled Arafat and all his lieutenants. Arafat went to Lebanon.

A precarious mixture of Christians and Muslims divided Lebanon at the time, with a significant faction of Druze and Shi'ites. Maronite Christians were the controlling element in Lebanese politics. The leading Christian figures were Bashir Gemayel of the Christian Phalange militia, and Danny Chamoun of the "Tigers" militia. The arrival of the PLO in Lebanon upset the already shaky balance of power in Lebanon and a civil war erupted between the Christian factions and the PLO.³¹

Bashir Gemayel sought and obtained Israeli assistance in the war against the PLO – Israel provided weapons and ammunition, but not active intervention. The civil war that followed destroyed Beirut, which at one time was called the

³¹ See, e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 191-201.

“Paris of the Middle East.” Lebanon’s civil war was a particularly vicious one, so vicious that Syria felt compelled to send in troops in 1976.

The scene was set. A pinch of Christians – warring Christian factions who quarreled fiercely amongst themselves (and received weapons from Israel); a dash of Muslims – Druze, Shi’ites, and the PLO, a nasty bunch of bickering, confusing groups of militants who seemed united only in their determination to kill one another and thereby destroy Lebanon. Throw in the Syrians and you have a bubbling cauldron of trouble that seethes with fury and at times boils over. The foaming rage of the Lebanese cauldron is the scene of Israel’s next action.

In June 1982 in what initially was called a retaliatory incursion to smash the PLO in southern Lebanon, Israeli troops, armor, and aircraft pressed into Lebanon. The Israelis were acting on what they called a clear provocation, the attempted assassination of Israeli ambassador Shlomo Argov in London. The attempt was linked to the Palestinian dissident group Abu Nidal, which Israel regarded as part of the PLO. Israeli warplanes targeted the PLO headquarters and offices in Beirut. The PLO in southern Lebanon struck back hitting Israeli settlements with Katyusha rockets. On 6 June 1982 Israel launched Operation “Peace for Galilee,” and let loose its armor and troops. What was intended to be an incursion into southern Lebanon to wipe out Palestinian guerilla bases near the border, turned into a full-scale invasion with Israel advancing all the way to Beirut.

Ariel Sharon, Israel’s Defense Minister at the time sent the army on to Beirut without informing Prime Minister Menachem Begin. By late June Israeli troops and armor were firmly entrenched in the outskirts of West Beirut, and they soon encircled the PLO. A nine-week siege began with the Israelis conducting daily artillery bombardments and air attacks. The Israelis intermittently cut off food, water, and electricity. Western media on nightly newscasts depicted the plight of

the Palestinians (there was a large population of non-combatants, families of PLO fighters). The "...massive use of IDF firepower against civilians traumatized Israeli society, caused rents in the military itself, and raised hackles in the West. The artillery and the air force tried to pinpoint military targets, but inevitably many civilians were hit. Western television showed the Israeli gunners and planes doing their worst, with brown-and-black smoke clouds over the dying city. Approval of Israel plummeted, reaching an all-time low in American opinion polls."³²

Sharon wanted the PLO out of Lebanon and would accept nothing less. Arafat and the PLO leadership refused to leave – so a stalemate developed. In an attempt to break the deadlock, the U.S. sent in Philip Habib to negotiate. Between the diplomatic efforts of Habib, the pressures of Syrian President Assad, and the pleas and appeals of the Lebanese, Arafat agreed to leave Lebanon.

The United States negotiated the terms of the departure and arranged for Arafat to go to Tunis. Over a period of twelve days more than 14,000 Palestinians left. Arafat was the last to go, he boarded a Greek cruise-liner and left for Tunisia.³³

The Sabra and Shatilla Refugee Camp Massacres

Bashir Gemayel, the leader of the Christian Phalangist militia had recently been elected President of Lebanon and would assume that office on 23 September 1982. On 1 September 1982, two days after Arafat departed Lebanon for Tunisia, Menachem Begin invited Gemayel to talks in Israel. Begin wanted a peace treaty between Lebanon and Israel, and he wanted it before 15 September. Gemayel insisted that he could not negotiate a peace treaty; he would not be

³² Benny Morris, *Op. Cit.*, p. 533.

³³ Bregman and El-Tahri, *Op. Cit.*, p. 210.

President until 23 September. Gemayel also told Begin that he needed to take the issue to the Lebanese Parliament and the people. The meeting ended without result.³⁴

On 14 September 1982, Bashir Gemayel was killed when a massive bomb detonated in the building that housed his office. Gemayel's Christian Phalangist followers believed PLO fighters were responsible and they wanted revenge (it was actually a Syrian agent who detonated the bomb). On 16 September, Christian Phalangist militia entered the Sabra and Shatilla Palestinian refuge camps, they claimed they were in hot pursuit of PLO fighters. The Israeli army, who controlled the camps, let them enter. Sharon and the Israeli military commanders had been warned that the Phalangist Christians were thirsty for revenge, but Sharon later denied having any forewarning when he was questioned during an internal Israeli investigation into the massacre.³⁵

The accounts vary, but somewhere between 700 to 800 Palestinians, men, women, and children were brutally slaughtered. The World's newspapers and television networks ran with the story. Front-page headlines and nightly news-hours showed victims lying in alleyways. Israeli public outcry led to an independent Israeli judicial inquiry. The judicial inquiry was known as the Kahan Commission named for the President of the Israeli Supreme Court, Yitzhak Kahan, who was to lead the investigation. The Kahan Commission found that the IDF and Sharon were indirectly responsible for the massacre. The IDF and Sharon knew, or should have known, that the Phalangist would want revenge for Gemayel's assassination. There was enough evidence to warn the Israelis that something was amiss – at the very least the Israelis were guilty of gross negligence

³⁴ See, *ibid.*, pp. 211-212.

³⁵ For a balanced account of the events and subsequent investigation see, Morris, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 543-548.

in ignoring the warning signs of the impending massacre, and of allowing the Phalangist militia into the camps to exact a murderous revenge.

Some responsibility was directed towards Begin and his Foreign Minister Shamir, but the main blame was aimed at Sharon. Sharon was forced to resign as Defense Minister, but “remained in the cabinet as a minister without portfolio.”³⁶

The First Intifada

The first uprising or *intifada* (Arabic for “shaking off”) began in December 1987. It was sparked when an Israeli vehicle ran into and killed four Arabs. The 1987 Intifada was a mass mobilization and protest by the Palestinian people. They wanted to “shake off,” the oppressive Israeli yoke. Israeli occupation and control within the Gaza Strip and West Bank and the encroachment of the settlements into Palestinian territory infuriated the Palestinians. For the most part, the 1987 Intifada involved many non-violent demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience – failure to pay taxes, boycotting Israeli goods and products, worker strikes and demonstrations. Youths would also throw stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli soldiers, but the Palestinians were rarely armed with guns.

The intifada focused World awareness on the plight of the Palestinian, and drew attention to the brutal methods used by the Israelis to quell the unrest. Arafat and the PLO leadership in exile in Tunisia, had little to do with the first intifada, and some of the balance of leadership shifted to local Palestinians. As a result of this shift in leadership the PLO in exile felt they had to make some moves.

³⁶ Morris, *ibid.*, p. 548.

In November 1988 in Algeria, Arafat and the PLO recognized the state of Israel, and proclaimed an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Going even further, in December 1988, Arafat and the PLO formally renounced terrorism as a method of achieving political aims. The U.S. played a large role in the PLO announcement. The U.S. had continually urged the PLO to renounce terrorism. America stood firm and told the PLO that they would never recognize them until they rejected the use of terrorism. Since the PLO wanted U.S. help in getting the Israelis to come up with a deal, the PLO changed their tune. The Israelis did not respond to these PLO gestures, but they began to think that perhaps only a political solution could resolve the problem. Another result of the PLO pronouncements was that the United States began a cautious dialogue with Yassar Arafat.

The Gulf War and the Road to Madrid

One consequence of Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait was to rekindle interest in Arab-Israeli peace talks. In a 6 March 1991 victory speech to Congress, George Bush (senior) stated: "We must do all that we can do to close the gap between Israel and the Arab states, and between the Israelis and the Palestinians."³⁷ President Bush sent his Secretary of State James Baker to Israel to test the waters.

There would be significant hurdles to any Israeli-Palestinian talks. Yassar Arafat and the exiled PLO in Tunisia had opposed the US-led coalition's attack on Iraq in the Gulf War. Now Arafat and the PLO were "persona non grata," neither Israel nor the U.S. would welcome them to any diplomatic negotiations.

Secretary of State Baker began his discussions with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. He also began talking with local Palestinians who lived in the

³⁷ Quoted in: Bregman and El-Tahri, Op. Cit., p. 251.

occupied territories. At first the Palestinians wanted no part in discussions without representation of the PLO – however, they hedged their bets somewhat by beginning talks with Secretary Baker and then consulting later with the PLO in Tunisia.

A multilateral conference was planned by the Bush administration and it was to be convened in Madrid in October 1991. Secretary James Baker pressed a hesitant Israel to attend the conference and open negotiations with the Arab states. Prime Minister Shamir accepted the offer to go to Madrid, but only on condition that the PLO be barred from attendance. The PLO did not attend, but the Palestinian delegates stayed in constant contact with Arafat.

Nothing of substance was accomplished at the Madrid conference to advance a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute, but a dialogue had been started – now at least the parties were beginning to get together and talk. The talks were resumed in Washington.

Negotiations in the U.S. capital soon became deadlocked, and an incident in Israel caused the Palestinian delegation to walk out. A young Israeli border policeman named Toledano had been kidnapped. Hamas, the radical Islamic Resistance Movement, stated that they would free Toledano in return for the release of Sheikh Yassin, the quadriplegic leader of Hamas. The kidnapped man was found dead and in retaliation for the murder the Israelis deported over 400 Hamas activists to South Lebanon. Hope for peace now appeared to be dead.

The Oslo Accords

The Oslo accords, officially known as the “Declaration of Principles,” started as secret negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. Israel at the start of the secret Oslo talks regarded the PLO as nothing but a gang of terrorists – the

Israelis had a law that banned direct contact with any member of the PLO, hence the secrecy.

The secret Oslo meetings bore fruit with negotiations developing into the Declaration of Principles. The Declaration of Principles laid out long term goals that were first based on mutual recognition – Israel and the PLO would recognize each other's right to exist as an entity. The meat of the agreement was that Israel would withdraw from the Gaza Strip and Jericho in the West Bank, and would officially recognize the PLO's right to self-government as the Palestinian Authority. The tough issues of the right of return for Palestinian refugees, Israeli settlements, and the status of Jerusalem would be resolved at a later date. The Declaration of Principles was signed in Washington D.C. on 13 September 1993 in a ceremony hosted by President Bill Clinton. The unbelievable had happened, as Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin shook hands with PLO leader Yassar Arafat, previously Israel's sworn enemy.

Oslo II and the Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin

Riding the wave of momentum, Yitzhak Rabin pursued and signed a peace treaty with Jordan in October 1994, increasing his prestige as a peacemaker and helping him win, along with Shimon Peres and Yassar Arafat, the Noble Peace Prize for 1994.

On 28 September 1995 Palestinians and Israelis signed another accord known as the "Interim Agreement," or "Oslo II." The agreement gave further autonomy to the Palestinian Authority to govern towns like Bethlehem, Jenin, Nablus, Ramallah, and parts of Hebron. The Israeli religious right was furious at Israel surrendering what they felt was Jewish land. They were particularly angry with Yitzhak Rabin. Rabin became what some termed, "a peace martyr," when a right-wing radical Israeli law student, Yigal Amir, shot and killed the Prime

Minister on 4 November 1995. Amir had justified his actions based on his beliefs that it was okay for Jews to kill other Jews who gave away parts of the biblical Land of Israel.

Wye River Accords and Camp David II

In May of 1996 the right-wing Likud party was returned to power with the election of Benjamin Netanyahu. President Clinton invited Netanyahu and Yassar Arafat to a nine-day summit at the Wye River Plantation in Maryland in October 1998. Key elements of the accord included, a Palestinian plan to crack down on violence by terrorists, an agreement by Israel to carry out a staged withdrawal from some 13 percent of the territory it occupied, a 14 percent transfer of land in the West Bank from joint control to Palestinian control, opening of a Palestinian airport in Gaza, and an Israeli commitment for further troop withdrawal from the West Bank.

The Israelis withdrew from some of the territories, the Palestinians began to crackdown on some of the terrorist elements, and the Palestinian National Airport was opened. No further action was made in fulfilling the commitments of the Wye River Accords. Prime Minister Netanyahu halted any additional actions to meet the terms of the accord, saying that the Palestinians had failed to meet Israel's security concerns as outlined in the agreement.

In September of 1999 Ehud Barak, who had won the Israeli election for Prime Minister based on his promise to move ahead with the peace talks, signed an agreement with Arafat to implement a modified version of the Wye River Accords.

In what has become known as Camp David II, President Clinton initiated a last-ditch attempt to secure a final Palestinian-Israeli peace agreement by inviting

Prime Minister Barak and Yassar Arafat to Camp David. There were three major sticking points precluding an agreement. The Palestinians wanted Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories in accordance with U.N. Resolution 242, they wanted Israel to accept the “right of return,” by Palestinian refugees, and they wanted Israel to recognize Palestinian sovereignty of East Jerusalem and control of the holy sites on the Temple Mount. Barak proclaimed that he could not withdraw to the pre-1967 lines as outlined in U.N. Resolution 242, Israel could not accept the “right of return,” of Palestinian refugees, and Israel would never relinquish full sovereignty of the entirety of Jerusalem. The Palestinian-Israeli peace deal, worked so hard by so many people, lies dormant to this date.

The Al-Aqsa Intifada

The Al-Aqsa Intifada started in September 2000 and continues to this date, in what has become a venomous, escalating cycle of violence, revenge and retribution that only leads to even more hatreds and retaliation. The appalling tragedy began on 29 September 2000, when Ariel Sharon, then head of the right-wing Likud Party, lead a group of legislators onto the Noble Sanctuary, in protest of then Prime Minister Ehud Barak’s negotiations with the Palestinians. Sharon felt that Barak was about to negotiate away Israeli’s right to visit the mount.

Sharon’s actions proved highly provocative, and were predicted beforehand to cause trouble. Palestinian’s and Muslims worldwide were enraged, and Palestinians immediately mounted protests. Immediately after Sharon departed the Noble Sanctuary, a large group of approximately 200-300 Arabs began to throw stones at the 1,000 Israeli riot police who had been assigned to provide protection for Sharon. The Israelis opened fire with rubber coated bullets and injured many Arabs. Thus, began the spiraling turmoil that has brought untold

grief, anger, and retribution to the land of Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, and Jesus.³⁸

The Issues

Jerusalem

“O pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls: and plenteousness with thy palaces. For my brethren and companions’ sakes: I will wish thee prosperity.”³⁹ So goes the hymn of praise for Jerusalem in the 1662 Prayer Book of the Church of England. Jerusalem, the City of David, a holy city for the three great monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – a city which to so many prayerful minds wishes only peace, but a city which in reality has seen so much sorrow.

It is the sovereignty of Jerusalem’s holy sites on the Temple Mount that is an intractable sticking point in achieving any final peace settlement between the Palestinians and the Israelis. The issue revolves around 35 acres of land that the Jews call the Temple Mount and the Arabs, *Haram al-Sharif*, or the Noble Sanctuary. The Temple Mount is the site of the First and Second Jewish Temples built there in ancient times, the first by King Solomon, and the second by King Herod. The Temple Mount is known in Jewish tradition as the “abode of God’s presence.” For religious Jews, it is where the Messiah will come and redemption will take place – to the Jews giving up the Temple Mount is unthinkable, it is sacrilege.

For the Palestinians, the Noble Sanctuary is the third holiest site in all of Islam. The Dome of the Rock (the golden-domed mosque that stands on the

³⁸ Lee Hockstader, “Israeli’s Tour of Holy Site Ignites Riot,” *The Washington Post*, 29 September 2000, p. A22.

³⁹ Quoted in: *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, Third Edition*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1980), p. 396.

grounds of the Temple Mount) is built over a rock from which tradition has it that the Prophet Muhammad was lifted to heaven on the winged horse *Al-Buraq*, where he met the Prophets Jesus, Moses and Abraham and was shown by God when and how to pray. The rock is the same rock that Jewish tradition has it that Abraham offered Isaac up for sacrifice (for Muslims Abraham offered Ishmael up for Sacrifice on a hill near Mecca). The Al-Aqsa mosque, also within the grounds of the Noble Sanctuary, was the first direction of prayer or *qibla*, designated so by the Prophet Muhammad before he changed the direction to Mecca. The noble sanctuary is not just a Palestinian holy site, but also the third holiest site for the entire Arab and Muslim world (now one billion strong). To Muslims, giving the Israelis exclusive sovereignty over the Noble Sanctuary is just not bearable.

The Right of Return

The 1948 Arab Israeli War and the 1967 War forced many Palestinians to flee Israel. United Nations Resolution 194 states that refugees wishing to return to their homes should be permitted to do so, and those electing not to return should be compensated for the loss of their property. The Palestinians insist on the right of return. More than one million of those refugees live in approximately 59 refugee camps operated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA), many of those camps are in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (many too, are in Jordan).

To Israeli leaders the right of return is non-negotiable. Letting the more than one million refugees return would be a demographic nightmare and Israel would not only be overwhelmed but might cease to exist as a Jewish state.

To the Palestinians, it is more than abiding by international law, it is the “heart and soul” of the Palestinian yearning to come home.

Borders and Settlement

For the Palestinians they view U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338 as the governing law dealing with borders and settlements – and if you view United Nations Resolutions as making up international law, then Israel is indeed in violation. U.N. Resolution 242 (338 calls on Israel to obey the requirements set out in 242) calls for Israel to withdraw to its pre-1967 borders, which would require returning East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip. This would require not only Israel's pulling out of the areas, but also dismantling many of the Jewish settlements built since 1967 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In the West Bank town of Hebron for instance, thousands of Israel troops protect about 400 militant Jews who live among 120,000 Arabs.⁴⁰

For conservative and religious Israelis, the settlements are seen as part of the biblical land of Israel and should be part of the state of Israel. The settlements are also seen as part of Israel's first line of defense, as a measure of security for Israel proper.

The sovereignty of Jerusalem, the right of return and the issue of borders and settlements all are thorny, explosive and seemingly inflexible issues, but if they aren't resolved the land of Israel and Palestine – and the holy city of Jerusalem will see sorrow heaped upon more sorrow, and the grief, perhaps, will only end when the world at last can no longer stand the pitiful cries of the anguished.

A Hegemonic Peace?

I recently read an essay in a book concerning the current intifada and the concerns of the Palestinians; the essay is entitled "The Peace of the Powerful." In the essay the author, Glenn E. Robinson, an associate professor at the Naval

⁴⁰ See, Scott Peterson, "Who's Eternal Capital Will It Be?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, 27 November 1996.

Post Graduate School in Monterey, argues that the Camp David II talks between Ehud Barak and Yassar Arafat were accomplished from an unequal footing, and were not exactly the “generous” Israeli offer that many would portray. Professor Robinson discusses what he calls a “hegemonic peace”:

“While the notion of a ‘just peace’ is held dear by so many, peace treaties invariably reflect power, not justice. ...Only at Camp David, for the first time, were the central issues of Jerusalem and refugees – among others – discussed. On each core issue, Israel held the power on the ground to decide what to implement. ...There was no comparable Palestinian leverage on Israel. There were no illegal Palestinian settlements in Israel, there were no Israeli refugees pining to return to Gaza; there were no Palestinian troops occupying Israeli lands.”⁴¹

Robinson’s essay reminds me of an account in Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian War*. It is the story of the Melian Dialogue. In the story, Athens, who is at war with Sparta, is conducting a military expedition against the island of Melos. Melos is a colony of Sparta who had refused to join the Athenian Empire like the neighboring islands. The Melians at first tried to claim neutrality and stay out of the war, but the Athenians would hear none of it and therefore encircled and lay siege to the island. The Melians called for a council. The Athenians obliged. The Melians attempt to argue that fair play and simple justice should rule the day, and that the Athenians should let the Melians live in peace so long as the Melians pose no threat. The Athenians are more circumspect, they feel obliged to either have the Melians as allies or as slaves – they could not have a neutral, that might backslide, behind their lines. The Melians want the Athenians to leave them alone; they feel that justice compels it. The Athenians remark: “...the standard of justice depends on the equality of power to compel and that in fact the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what

⁴¹ Glenn E. Robinson, “The Peace of the Powerful,” *The New Intifada: Resisting Israel’s Apartheid*, edited by Roane Carey, (Verso, London, 2001) p. 112.

they have to accept.”⁴² The Melians refuse to become allies of the Athenians. The Athenians attack, kill all the adult men, and enslave all the women and children. For the Athenians it was a simple “might makes right” issue. The standard of justice for the Melians was one of Athenian *machtpolitik* or power politics. What is the standard of justice in Palestine?

⁴² Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, translated by Rex Warner, (Penguin Books, London, 1972) p. 402.

Chapter 29

THE HINT OF A BREEZE: ARE THE WINDS OF CHANGE ABOUT TO BLOW?

The unrelenting stalemate in peace negotiations and the continuing succession of reprisals – the violence and hatred that begets more violence and hatred – hangs over Israel and the Palestinian territories like a thick sickening miasma. What is needed is a fresh breeze, some strong winds of change, to blow away the fog, to break the vicious cycle of violence that has sunk its teeth into the Israeli and Palestinian's collective psyche with pit bull tenacity. One side or the other must step back and relent – not a total compromise, but a little give, perhaps a magnanimous unilateral offer to give in on one point of contention. The Palestinians could end the suicide bombings, or the Israelis could pull out of the occupied territories and cease the encroachment of settlements. One side must decide to “turn the other cheek,” if only for an instant, in an effort to set the peace process back on a serious track.

Is there the hint of a breeze in Israel – a breeze that could develop into the winds of potential change? On 29 January, the *Washington Post* reported that over 60 Israeli army reservists publicly refused to continue serving in the Palestinian territories “on the grounds that Israel's occupation forces there are abusing and humiliating Palestinians.”¹ On the 4th of February, *The Jerusalem Post* reported that the IDF was doing everything it could to “cause the affair to blow over,” and

¹ Lee Hockstader, “Israeli Reservists Refuse Territories Duty,” *The Washington Post*, 29 January 2002, p. A16.

quoted the reservist's spokesman as saying the number of reservists refusing to serve in the territories had grown to 150.²

The Israeli reservists³ who have refused service in the occupied territories have set up a web site (www.seruv.org) asking people to sign their petition. Going to the web site you find at the top of the page, the title, "Courage to Refuse." They outline their grievance by stating that they "were issued commands and directives that had nothing to do with the security of our country, and that had the sole purpose of perpetuating our control over the Palestinian people...we shall not continue to fight beyond the 1967 borders in order to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people."⁴

On 5 February 2002, *The New York Times* reported that, "After 16 months of grinding conflict with the Palestinians, a few signs of dissent are appearing in Israeli society. More than 100 reserve officers and soldiers have signed a statement that they will not serve any longer in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, lands Israel took in the 1967 war."⁵

More dissent is reported in *The Jerusalem Post* on 5 February 2002, as the paper reports that the Israeli left-wing group, "Peace Now," is planning demonstrations demanding that Israel unilaterally withdraw from the settlements. The article quotes the Peace Now spokesman, Didi Remez as saying, "only a radical step like

² Arie O'Sullivan, "IDF wants reservists' refusal affair to go away," *The Jerusalem Post*, Internet Edition, 4 February 2002, <http://www.jpost.com/Editions/2002/02/04/News/News.42804.html>

³ On 6 February 2002, both *Ha'aretz*, and *The Jerusalem Post* report an additional 125 soldiers sign the letter of refusal, see, e.g., "Another 125 reserve soldiers sign letter of refusal," *Ha'aretz*, 6 February 2002, <http://www.haaretzdaily.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml>

⁴ Quoted from web site: <http://www.seruv.org>

⁵ James Bennet, "Israeli's Dual Job: Chief of Defense, and Dissent," *The New York Times*, 5 February 2002

a unilateral withdrawal would convince the PA (*Palestinian Authority*) Israel is serious about ending the occupation.”⁶

Israeli Major General Avraham Tamir (who once served as Sharon’s Assistant Operations Officer in the Yom Kippur War), is quoted in the daily Israeli newspaper, *Ha’aretz*, “More than anything else, this war is characterized by Israel’s heavy response. Killing every Arab with a 500-kilo hammer is way out of proportion...Sharon can adopt a scorched earth policy, destroy the Palestinian infrastructure, and exile the entire Palestinian leadership, but as long as the hostility remains, he won’t defeat terror.”⁷

On 4 February five Palestinians militants were killed when their automobile exploded. The Palestinian Authority called it an assassination, the Israeli army “which has killed dozens of Palestinians under a policy it calls ‘targeted killings,’ neither confirmed or denied involvement.”⁸ But *Ha’aretz* has no doubts about who conducted the killings and questions the policy, stating: “...the way out of the violent national conflict will not be possible through the use of force. The assassination of five members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine yesterday, between Rafah and Khan Yunis, is a link in a chain of terror attacks, assassinations and vengeance attacks that can not quell the violence.”⁹ *The Washington Times*, reported on 6 February, that centrist Israelis now question the policy of targeted killings. The article quotes Yaakov Peri, the former head of Israel’s domestic security agency, Shabak, as saying, “...the assassinations keep

⁶ Gil Hoffman, “Peace Now backs unilateral withdrawal,” *The Jerusalem Post*, Internet Edition, 5 February 2002, <http://www.jpost.com/Editions/2002/02/05/News/News.42870.html>

⁷ Amnon Barzilai, “For the first time, a supreme commander,” *Ha’aretz*, 5 February 2002, <http://www.haaretzdaily.com>

⁸ Lee Hockstader, “Blast in Gaza Leaves 5 Palestinians Dead,” *The Washington Post*, 5 February 2002, p. A11.

⁹ “A breakthrough is needed,” *Ha’aretz*, 5 February 2002, <http://www.haaretzdaily.com>

Israelis and Palestinians mired in a cycle of violence and retribution and should be carried out much more sparingly.”¹⁰

Israel’s political right-wing is stepping up their own campaign of dissent, a campaign to expel all Palestinians from Israel. *The Christian Science Monitor* quotes Israeli Tourism Minister Benny Elon of the far-right Moledet party: “Israel has the right to bring upon the Palestinians ‘another nakba,’ or catastrophe, similar to 1948, when an estimated 700,000 of them were expelled or fled during the Arab-Israeli war.”¹¹

More and more Israelis are questioning the “targeted killings” policy, as a policy that many regard as simple retribution and an act that can only spawn more reprisals from the Palestinians. Many would call for a halt to the policy – and as mentioned above, there are even those who now call for a unilateral withdrawal to Israel’s pre-1967 borders.

There are perhaps some dangers in a unilateral withdrawal. It has been suggested that the “young guard,” an element of younger Palestinians who oppose Yasir Arafat, would use a unilateral withdrawal as a tool to claim victory – a victory for the violent methods of the current intifada.¹² The young guard is seen as the general Palestinian response to Arafat and the “old guard’s,” corrupt government and failure to win independence. Much of the Palestinian response is brought on by perceptions of Israel’s own cruel and violent methods. There is a growing anger among Palestinians, who increasingly see violence as the only thing that will work on the Israelis. One author writes: “In July 2000, fewer than

¹⁰ Dan Ephron, “Centrists question assassination policy,” *The Washington Times*, Internet Edition, 6 February 2002, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/world/20020206-66696075.htm>

¹¹ Ben Lynfield, “Israeli expulsion idea gains steam,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, Internet Edition, 6 February 2002, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0206/p05s01-wome.htm>

¹² See e.g., Khalil Shikaki, “Palestinians Divided,” *Foreign Affairs*, (January/February 2002, Vol 81, No. 1) pp. 89-105.

one-third of Palestinians believed that violence would help achieve goals in ways that negotiations could not; a year later 59 percent had come to that conclusion. Indeed, after nine months of the intifida, 71 percent thought that the fighting had already had such effect.”¹³

The idea of a unilateral withdrawal, however, just may work. Any such withdrawal could be announced before hand as a generous and noble gesture of peace – a move to the moral high ground. A message could be clearly sent to Yasir Arafat as the duly elected leader of the Palestinian Authority, perhaps even saying that the withdrawal was in response to Arafat’s recent *New York Times* article, “The Palestinian Vision of Peace,” wherein he condemns the terrorism of the suicide bombers and states that the Palestinians are ready to end the conflict and renew negotiations.¹⁴ Despite the rhetoric streaming from both sides, I believe that there are certainly diplomatic methods that could be used to advance a unilateral withdrawal.

But Prime Minister Sharon now refuses to deal with Arafat, on the grounds that Arafat has refused to rein in the terrorists and extremists. Even the current U.S. administration has expressed frustration and doubts about dealing with Chairman Arafat.¹⁵

If not Arafat then who? Who could realistically replace him? Don’t get me wrong, I am not an Arafat fan, but in my reading of all the journals and newspapers, I have yet to run across anyone from academia, business, or politics

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 93

¹⁴ Yasir Arafat, “The Palestinian Vision of Peace,” *The New York Times*, 3 February 2002, Internet Edition, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/02/03/opinion/03ARAF.html>

¹⁵ See, e.g., “Powell Tells Arafat To Make Choice,” *The New York Times*, 5 February 2002, Internet Edition, <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/national/AP-US-Mideast.html>

who would propose a viable alternate. Hinting that without Arafat things could get worse, Kahlil Shikaki, Associate Professor of Political Science at Bir Zeit University, writes in *Foreign Affairs*, “Today Arafat’s leadership is the glue that keeps the old guard and young guard together, preventing a full and immediate takeover of the latter. Despite his poor communication skills, Arafat continues to give the Palestinian public a sense of stability, thus preventing large-scale breakdown of law and order. His presence deters the Islamists from posing an immediate threat to the shaky dominance of the nationalists; in his absence, all hell could break loose.”¹⁶

Another interesting proposal was put forward in an “opinion” piece in *The New York Times*, by Tom Friedman, who suggests a unilateral full recognition of Israel by the 22 nations in the Arab League. He writes: “The 22 members of the Arab League say to Israel that in return for a complete Israeli withdrawal to the June 4, 1967, lines – in the West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem and on the Golan Heights – we offer full recognition of Israel, diplomatic relations, normalized trade and security guarantees. Full peace with all 22 Arab states for full withdrawal.”¹⁷ A sound proposal, if only the Arab states can swallow their pride and perceptions of Arab humiliation at the hands of Israel. If only they can see the clear, simple logic behind Friedman’s proposal.

Those Israelis who would stir a healthy breeze are not lone voices crying in the wilderness. Besides the 100 or so reservists, and Peace Now, there are members of academia, military leaders, journalists, and others who have come to the realization that vengeful reprisals will not work. I think the movement bears

¹⁶ Shikaki, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

¹⁷ Thomas L. Friedman, “Dear Arab League,” *The New York Times*, 6 February 2002, Internet Edition, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/02/06/opinion/06FRIE.html>

watching, as it may just be the impetus for a growing, broader development in making a genuine attempt at re-starting the peace process.

Apart from whether or not there is a re-ignition of the peace process, the reprisals must stop. The SS of Nazi Germany would wipe out entire villages in reprisal for killing German soldiers – they learned the lesson that reprisals don't work the hard way, by a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Allies. Retribution and reprisals only produce more retribution and reprisals. Something is needed – it could be something as small as placing one piece in a puzzle, one piece that ultimately leads to a solution. Small breezes lead to strong winds. Perhaps the courage that the 100 or so reservists have called, “the courage to refuse,” is just that piece of the puzzle – just the sort of courage that it will take to move towards a final resolution. Maybe those reservists and other Israelis will sustain that courage – the courage to refuse to carry on the vicious cycle of senseless hatred and retribution.

There is promise that the winds of change may be about to blow. Hopefully the winds of change will fill the sails of peace. There are breezes astir. Can the United States help position those sails to catch the full force of the wind? What will we do? Will we move with the winds of change, or, in the words of the popular song by Bob Seger, will we run – “against the wind?”

Chapter 30

ARAB CULTURE AND CUSTOMS

I once heard a story, which is perhaps apocryphal, but it illustrates American ignorance at Arab customs and culture. A high-ranking American officer was discussing the thousands of propaganda leaflets dropped on Iraq during the Gulf War and commented that, “at least the Iraqis can use them as toilet paper.” The tale demonstrates the officer’s lack of knowledge of Arab ways – Arabs do not use toilet paper, they use their left hand and water. That is why you do not extend your left hand to an Arab or pass anything to them with the left hand. The left hand is the “unclean” hand.

Arab Hospitality

To an Arab, being hospitable is more than just being polite; it is a thing of honor, a sacred duty. The reason for this lies within the Bedouin ethos, especially that ethos as it developed in the Arabian Peninsula. In the barren, desolate desert the environment and hardships are severe. There is little water, little food, and scarce resources of any kind that are needed to sustain human life. The Bedouin depended on family and tribe for survival. Tribal customs and hospitality – giving shelter, water and food – often meant life or death. Hospitality is part of an Arab’s customs and culture; it is a virtue that he must demonstrate regardless of personal cost.

Arabs are very generous; they regard generosity as an important character trait, an important part of honor. If you’re invited to an Arab’s home, you can expect grand treatment. You will probably first be offered a small round cup of thick

Arabic coffee, and then a glass of sweet tea or “chai.” You may not like coffee or tea, and of course can refuse the offer, but realize that it is polite in Arab society to always refuse once, so if you are annoyed after your first refusal that it is again offered, take this into consideration. At any rate unless you cannot drink coffee or tea for medical reasons, it is better to take a little than to turn it down. Drinking even a little avoids awkward moments and perhaps offending your host.

After coffee and tea, there will be conversation and the evening will usually end with a meal. In some Arab homes, the food will be eaten with the hands. When I was in Jordan, I was invited to a Jordanian Colonel’s home for dinner. The dinner was the Jordanian national dish known as “Mansaf,” lamb seasoned with aromatic herbs, lightly spiced, cooked in yogurt, and served with huge quantities of rice. Everyone stands at a table in the center of the room, with a huge platter on the table piled high with rice and lamb. A creamy yogurt sauce is poured over the rice and you form a ball with the rice and lamb and pop it into your mouth. Needless to say, to an American it feels awkward and messy, but after the meal everyone is shown to a side room adjacent to the dining area where you wash up. By the way, Mansaf is absolutely wonderful and I highly recommend it.

When dining with Arabs, always remember to use the right hand to pass things – even if you are left-handed. As I mentioned above, the left hand is the “unclean” hand and it is very rude to offer things or extend the left hand to an Arab. Additionally, it is considered extremely rude and offensive to expose the bottom of your shoes to an Arab. So when sitting in chairs or relaxing on cushions in an Arab’s home, remember to keep the bottoms of your shoes pointed down or on the ground.

If you are living in an Arab country and an Arab comes to your home, remember it is always customary to offer a drink – coffee, tea or a soft drink.

And also, remember that if the Arab at first refuses, offer again. As I mentioned before, it is the custom to always refuse at least once.

Greetings

When you enter a room full of Arabs it is customary to go around and shake everyone's hand. Don't be surprised if the handshake is not as firm as you would expect. Arabs do not shake hands as firmly as Americans. Americans generally shake hands only when we are first introduced to someone. Arabs shake hands upon every meeting and also when leaving. Arabs may also greet each other with a kiss upon the cheeks, and it is not uncommon to see Arab men walking and holding hands. Arabs will offer long handshakes, will grasp elbows, and sometimes place a hand upon a shoulder. Arabs often hug and embrace upon meeting – there is a good deal of physical touching among Arab men. This is acceptable and considered the norm in the Arab world. If an Arab grasps your elbow during a handshake or hugs you in a greeting, consider it an honor, and an indicator of acceptance.

Arabs require a good deal less personal space than Americans; so don't be surprised if an Arab comes very close to you when engaged in conversation. If you are in an Arab country for any length of time, be prepared – your American norm of personal space will be violated, but it is not meant to offend. On the contrary, it is meant in a warm and accepting sense.

There are some gestures to avoid as well. Giving the “okay” sign in many Arab countries is considered giving the sign of the “evil eye,” which Arabs may use in combination with verbal curses. Pointing your finger or object at someone while talking is considered a threat and should not be done. Also, avoid looking at your watch while in a meeting with an Arab, this is considered rude behavior

and indicates you are in a hurry and wish to get away. The concept of time in the Arab world is different than the West.

Arab Women

The rules concerning greetings mentioned above do not apply to Arab women. Unless an Arab woman offers you a handshake, do not initiate. Public displays of affection – contact between a man and a woman in public areas is considered obscene and is just not done in most Arab countries. Of course these rules will vary from country to country, but as a general rule, Arab society is a man's world. Arab men are very protective of their women. An American should avoid gazing at Arab women; it is considered not only rude, but also insulting. Contact with Arab women should be done in business only; to go any further invites trouble. It is never permissible to visit a female at her home without a male family member being present. Additionally, it is also considered insulting to ask an Arab about his wife or other female family members. An American couple stationed in an Arab country should remember the rules on public touching. Honoring Arab customs certainly avoids embarrassment and the potential of offending the Arab hosts.

Saving Face

An Arab's sense of honor is deeply imbedded into the Arab soul. It starts with family loyalty. An old Arab proverb goes, "I and my brothers against my cousins; I and my cousins against the stranger." Family loyalty dominates every facet of Arab life. Loyalty works in a series of concentric circles, the first and inner circle is the immediate family, the next circle out is the circle of the clan, with cousins and uncles, etc., the next circle will be related kin groups and others in the tribe. With inter-tribal marriages, alliances are formed and new members added to the clan and tribe. Tribal and clan loyalties sometimes may even mean

denying one's own children for the sake and honor of the tribe, if tribe or clan interests dictate. Honor killings in Jordan and other Arab countries take place when a female member of a family is deemed to have dishonored the family by some perceived violation of a sexual rule. In a surprising number of Arab countries, women and girls who violate sexual rules or other social norms are often murdered or maimed to satisfy family honor and to "save face."

Arab children are, from an early age, imbued with a sense of saving face and family honor. Honor, dignity and family reputation are inseparable. Parents are revered. The Prophet Muhammad is supposed to have said, "Heaven is under a mother's feet." Fathers are venerated. To be old is considered to be wise in Arab society, so therefore the aged are accorded great respect.

Anything done to shame or discredit the family is considered dishonorable and tantamount to a grave sin. Very closely related to family honor is personal dignity, because if one disgraces oneself it also serves to disgrace the family. Avoiding shame and dishonor can be so important that an Arab will lie, even when the lie is obvious, to save face and preserve not only personal dignity, but family honor as well.

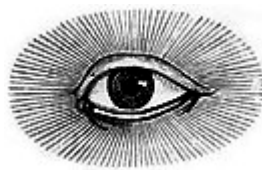
The American businessman or serviceman who works with Arabs soon learns that there are certain chores and tasks that an Arab feels below his status. To try and force the Arab to do these tasks puts the Arab in a position to "lose face." Additionally, Americans who have Arabs serving in a subordinate role or in a training status must understand that direct criticism of an Arab will also cause the Arab to "lose face." To tell the Arab that he has done something wrong puts him in the position that he must protect his honor. For instance saying, "What did you do to that car?" puts the Arab in a position of his having possibly done something wrong and therefore he must save face. If you were to remark, "What

went wrong with the car?” you adopt a neutral position, which places no blame on the Arab.

Americans have “face” too. We can lose face and therefore lose Arab respect as well. For example, washing cars is a common thing for nearly all Americans, rich or poor. To an Arab washing a car is demeaning and a sign of “low birth.” Respectable Arabs do not wash cars – servants wash cars. An American seen washing a car stoops to the debased level of a servant and thus loses Arab respect.

Muslims are prohibited from eating pork and drinking alcoholic beverages, therefore Americans must remember to never, as a general rule, offer these forbidden things to a Muslim. For an American who is in a Muslim country during Ramadan, it is courteous and considerate to not smoke, eat or drink in front of a Muslim during the daylight fasting hours. It is also not a good idea to offer a Muslim food, drink or a cigarette during the fast hours.

The “Evil Eye”



The concept of the “evil eye,” predates Islam and is associated with superstitions, evil spirits and jinn. Belief in the “evil eye,” is a sort of folk-Islam and finds support in Islamic countries such as Egypt, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, etc. In antiquity, it was believed that the process of sight involved emanating rays from the eyes. And sometimes those emanations were projected with evil. A carry-over from this ancient thought is the idea that someone can feel it when

they are being watched. Many Muslims live in terrible fear of the influence of evil spirits, demons and of the “evil eye,” and will wear amulets and place talismans on their doors to ward off these evil spirits and the effects of the “evil eye.” I have seen many a house or apartment in Ismailia Egypt and in Cairo that have a blue porcelain eye affixed to the front door. Many people will wear blue beads or blue porcelain eyes to ward off evil.

One concept of the evil eye is to gaze at someone with envy – for instance, a person who is childless stares at a Muslim’s child. He or she stares because they envy that person who has the child. Those who follow this belief, feel that evil enters because of the childless person’s envy of the family with the child. The envy is so strong that the “evil eye” desires to see that family deprived of the child – and therefore, will perhaps wish harm to befall the child. If the “evil eyed” person can’t have a child, then why should that family? Another concept is that to stare is to project evil towards another, regardless of envy. There are those who live in constant fear of the force of the evil eye, a force they believe can stab through the air and cause illness, property damage and even death – hence going back to the ancient view that the eye emanates rays.

It is not wise to stare at Arabs. There are many Arabs who believe that Westerners are possessed by evil and have the “evil eye.”

Things Arabic

There are many magnificent things in the Arab world. Arab cuisine is wonderful and varied. I will never forget the fantastic smells coming from the ovens as Arabic bread is being baked. Nor will I forget the spice stalls in the *souks* (markets), with the many strange and exotic smells and colors, or the plaintive cry of the muezzin calling the Muslim faithful to prayer. I remember standing at Government House, the U.N. Military Observer Headquarters in

Jerusalem, and hearing the call to prayer waft across the valley, as I marveled at the golden domed mosque, the “Dome of the Rock” in the walled old-city of Jerusalem.

Arabs gave us algebra and trigonometry. They made great advances in medicine, astronomy and architecture. The Arabs helped preserve Hellenic thought by painstakingly recording the works of Plato, Aristotle, Aristophanes, etc. They even gave us words that we use in our everyday English vocabulary:

<u>English Word</u>	<u>Arabic Name</u>
Admiral	Amir-ul Bahr
Alcohol	al-kohl
Alchemy	Al-kimiya
Algorithm	Al-Khawarizmi
Azimuth	Al-sumut
Banana	Banana
Borax	Buraq
Coffee	Qahwah
Cotton	Qutn
Elixir	al-Aksir
Genie	jinni
Ghoul	Ghul
Giraffe	Zirafah
Guitar	Qitar
Jar	Jarrah
Jasmine	Yasmin
Lemon	Limun
Lime	Limah
Lute	al-ud
Orange	Naranj
Safari	Safara
Sofa	suffah
Sugar	Sukkar

The above list is not by any means all-inclusive, but it demonstrates the rich heritage that our English language owes to Arabic.

Chapter 31

WHAT CAN WE DO?

The telling results of a Gallup Poll taken in the Middle East were released in late February of 2002 – responses to questions asked in that poll indicate that an overwhelming majority of Muslims view the United States with hostility. They see the U.S. as: “ruthless, aggressive, conceited, arrogant, easily provoked, biased.”¹ What can we do to stem the rush of rising Muslim resentments? How can we reverse the course of mounting Muslim animosities? In this essay, I will attempt to give my opinion of actions the United States can undertake that will perhaps begin to turn the swelling tide of Muslim opinion away from hatred towards America and the West. Turning the tide of Islamic enmity may prove critical to winning the global war on terrorism.

First, let me pause and say a word about America winning the global war on terrorism. I have no doubts whatsoever that we will achieve a victory in this war. Tom Brokaw wrote a book entitled, *The Greatest Generation*, a book about the determination and courage of the generation of Americans that endured the Great Depression, won the Second World War, and turned their hopes and dreams of a prosperous modern America into reality. That was my father’s generation, a young man who left a small tobacco farm in rural Kentucky and sailed with the Navy in the war-tossed seas of the South Pacific. I would not for one moment denigrate that great generation. It is from those firm, beloved roots, that I, and millions of other Americans, drink a deep and cherished nourishment. We are the seeds of that great generation – we have the same genes, the same

¹ Andrea Stone, “In Poll, Islamic World Says Arabs Not Involved In 9/11,” *USA Today*, 27 February 2002, p. 1.

DNA makeup, and the same bold spirit stirs in our hearts. Many of us have the same genes of another great generation, a generation that saw more Americans killed in battle, than all the combined deaths of all America's wars, and that was the Civil War. The Civil War generation experienced trials and anguish that today we could not begin to fathom. They conquered those hardships, withstood the anguish, bound the nation's wounds and ultimately brought our nation closer than it had ever been. Throughout our history American generations have faced extraordinary times, suffered extraordinary difficulties, but in every struggle they triumphed and won. That same blood of courage and resolve that flowed through our forefathers' veins courses through our veins. Today we face similar, extraordinary times. I do not doubt for one moment that we will not win this war – it may take time, perhaps years, and it will take a great deal of patience, but we will win.

Educating America and the Military

First we must educate ourselves. We need to find answers to the “whys” of the current crisis. Why does the Arab and Muslim world hate us so? Why would anyone want to kill so many innocent people as they did on 9/11? We need to examine the reasons that lie behind the hate. We need to learn to distinguish groups such as Al Qa'ida, who delight at the deaths of infidel Americans, from the poor Egyptian farmer or Palestinian refugee who may, in varying degrees, hate America, but would never turn that hate into the dreadful action of taking innocent lives.

Michael Howard, in a January 2002 article in *Foreign Affairs*, notes: “...for most Americans it must be said that Islam remains one vast terra incognita – and one, like those blank areas on medieval maps, inhabited largely by dragons.”² Muslim

² Michael Howard, “What's in a Name? How to Fight Terrorism,” *Foreign Affairs*, (January/February 2002), p. 13.

hatred of the West is not a new phenomenon. Bernard Lewis wrote an article in the September 1990 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, entitled “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” which addressed the very same issues that have recently caused many people to scratch their heads and wonder why Muslims don’t like America.³ The Egyptian Islamic extremist, Sayyid Qutb, who many regard as the ideological grandfather of Al Qaeda, wrote volumes of anti-Western dogma for over a decade, from the 1950s until his death in 1966. Qutb’s books vilify America and Western society – and if you read them they offer enlightening insights into why some Muslims hate us.

Muslim animosities have been around a long time and are not likely to dissipate any time soon. So it is in our best interests to examine the reasons behind the rage. Knowledge is power, and if we gain the knowledge of “why,” then perhaps we can take what we gain to work on some solutions.

You can be sure that the radical Islamic terrorists would prefer Americans to sit back, “fat, dumb, and happy,” and ignore the Muslim world for two reasons: 1) they want to advance their extremist brand of Islam without obstruction, and 2) they recognize that if we understand their ideologies, then we can develop methods and means to counter them.

American Universities have offered classes in Islam and the Arab world for decades, and I would hope that students in those schools take an interest in learning about Islam. It is rare, however, for high schools and grade schools to teach anything on Islam. I believe that tailored lectures or introductory courses in high school political science-current events classes or grade school civic courses would help our next generation learn something of a topic that will be around for many years to come.

³ Bernard Lewis, “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1990

It becomes more important, even critical, for our military schools to give our service men and women an introductory education in Islam. We are currently conducting a war against terrorism, and that terrorism has its roots in aspects of radical extremist Islamic ideology. Not all terrorism is rooted in Islamic thought, but the terrorism that killed our young Marines in Beirut, our young Airmen in Khobar Towers, and our young Sailors in the attack on the USS Cole, finds its pedigree in the writings of Sayyid Qutb, and other Islamic extremists.

The ancient Chinese General Sun Tzu once said, “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the results of a hundred battles.”⁴ We need to know our enemies – and knowing our enemies is especially important for our military troops. Not all Muslims are our enemies, but unless we educate ourselves, we may not know the difference between a Muslim who may hate us for seemingly valid reasons, but who would never kill without justification and the Muslim who makes no distinction and would kill any and all Americans given the opportunity.

We could start with familiarization courses in basic training and develop more advanced courses for our senior leaders in our service colleges, such as Air University, Naval War College and Army War College. A list of recommended reading could be developed and disseminated throughout the commands. There are a number of things that our services can do to help our troops understand the ideologies that fuel the fires of terrorism – we just need to start working these ideas into reality.

⁴ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, edited by James Clavell, (Delta Book, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, New York, NY, 1983), p. 18.

Some Thoughts on the Information Campaign

or “Winning the Hearts and Minds”

If the US is serious about winning the propaganda war – about winning the hearts and minds of the Muslim world, we need to take actions that directly and tangibly impact Muslims. Media relations’ blitzes, daily press meetings, and Department of Defense (DoD) teams drafting perception management themes for media release have a place, but will have very little effect on grass-roots Muslim opinion. Winning the hearts and minds of Islam will be key to any long-lasting victory over terrorism, and as Richard Holbrooke (U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations in the Clinton administration) states: “...defining what this war is really about in the minds of the one billion Muslims in the world will be of decisive and historic importance.”⁵

The average Muslim on the street sees the current crisis as a West versus Islam issue. They saw the bombs falling on Afghanistan as an attack on Islam, and the killing of innocent Muslim women and children. Yes, we in the West know that this is not true, and we continually deny in the press and media that we intentionally kill anyone other than combatants. Unfortunately, much of what we put forward for public consumption is mirror-image thinking, i.e., we believe that Islam will believe what we say, simply because we believe it. We believe that they should think like we do. They do not.

The Nazi propaganda machine worked very hard at winning the hearts and minds of the US and Great Britain, happily with little success. I am not, by any stretch of the imagination, comparing the current situation with Hitler’s propaganda war, but it does illustrate the difficulty of winning over a population that firmly believes in its ideals and principles. Pentagon press conferences with

⁵ Holbrooke, Richard. “Get the Message Out.” *Washington Post*, 28 October 2001, p. B7.

senior US officials stating that Usama bin Ladin will fight to the last Afghan, resonate well with the US and other western audiences, but will have little impact on the Muslim world. In fact, there exist in the Muslim world many people with the strength of conviction to fight to the last man.

The roots of Muslim rage are old and run deep. Most in the Arab world have little concept of a nation – the typical grass roots Arab views the world through concentric circles. The smallest circle is family, the next circle out is the clan, and the largest circle is the tribe. The concept of a nation-state is very new to the Arab world, and most view the relationship of the nation-state as they would view loyalty to a larger tribe. Islam is the linking element of the circles – it is the thread that runs through every aspect of Arab life. Usama bin Ladin and other Islamic fundamentalists have managed to use a radical interpretation of Islam to win over many converts. Usama has become the Islamic “David” versus the Western “Goliath.” Because the roots of Muslim resentment, jealousy, and poverty are deep, it makes it that much more difficult to convince them that the US is not the satanic neo-colonial power that fundamentalists would like them to believe.

Most of the rhetoric and official public pronouncements only impress a US and Western population. Those in the Muslim world are already convinced of their ideals and generally will call most of our words lies. This is not to say that the US should abandon all efforts for winning over the hearts and minds of the Arab and Muslim world, but its focus needs to be different.

First the US information campaign needs top-down direction. The debacle involving the Office of Strategic Influence (OSI) and the resulting beating the White House and the Pentagon took in the press tells a story in and of itself.

I liken the current effort in the US information campaign of “winning the hearts and minds,” as a giant funnel – with a great number of people, enormous resources, and huge amounts of money being poured in the top – but with only a trickle of a realistic campaign product flowing out. In a cost benefit analysis, is the small drip of product worth the enormous cost of the effort? In my personal observation, if you will, a “big picture” view is necessary to see the folly of what is really going on. We need to throw out the funnel and develop a hose instead, with equal amounts of effort and product flowing evenly through both ends. And how do we do this?

As I said above, the US needs top-down direction similar to that provided by the Office of War Information, which was created in the Second World War. The goal of the Office of War Information was to convey American war aims to both the domestic and foreign audience. Achieving this goal involved the Office, in one way or another, with nearly every aspect of America’s war effort.

We need something akin to the Office of War Information today. It should be a cabinet level office or department with direct ties to the President and US senior leadership, with links and support from the Department of Defense, the State Department, Central Intelligence Agency, etc. A few hand-picked “smart” individuals who have the authority, responsibility and resources to take a “big-picture,” strategic view of what is needed, would, in my opinion, accomplish much more, much faster than the current “funnel” process that we have in place today.

The new cabinet could be called “The Department of Global Information,” and could function much like the old Office of War Information, or the State Department’s, United States Information Agency (USIA), which did brilliant work from 1953 until its demise in 1999.

Whatever it is called and however it might be structured, this much is sure, it would need cabinet level direction and the ability to tap the expertise and resources of not only the Department of Defense, State Department, or CIA, but corporate America as well. Corporate giants like *Coca-Cola* have been operating worldwide (and in all the Muslim markets) for many years, and their marketing skills and knowledge of “target audiences” are a treasure trove of resources that we cannot ignore. We need to draw on the market knowledge of corporate America – and a cabinet level office would have the authority, power, and resources to do just that.

The cabinet-level office could also hire Arab and Muslim media and public relations firms to help in distributing realistic information that would resonate with Muslim target audiences. Who better to spread the word than a segment of the target audience itself?

Perhaps such a new office is being contemplated. A 20 February 2002, *New York Times*, article states that President Bush wants to create “...a permanent office of global diplomacy to spread a positive image of the United States around the world and combat anti-Americanism...” The article goes on and quotes senior administration officials: “The president believes it is a critical part of national security to communicate U.S. foreign policy to a global audience in times of peace as well as war...What is important is we want to do a better job of using the government seamlessly to give direction to the president’s global diplomacy.”⁶ It remains to be seen if the contemplated office will have cabinet level authority, but an office with the power, authority, resources and responsibility of a cabinet level office is needed. A cabinet level office that not only seamlessly directs U.S.

⁶ Elizabeth Becker and James Dao, “A Nation Challenged: Hearts and Minds; Bush Will Keep the Wartime Operation Promoting America,” *The New York Times*, 20 February 2002, p. A11.

government efforts, but also taps corporate America's expertise, would go a long way in helping direct the United States' global diplomacy.

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

The "war of words" in any campaign intended to win the hearts and minds of the Muslim world, realistically, can only achieve limited success in turning around a deep-seated and unshakable sense of hatred for the West. When an American gets in front of a TV camera and says that the US does not harbor ill feelings towards Islam, Muslims look askance. When Americans say that our war on terrorism is not a war on Islam, Muslims roll their eyes up into their heads and proclaim: "another American lie." Why? Because to the Muslim, the US has historically done little to demonstrate otherwise. If we are to win the hearts and minds of the Arab and Muslim world, then we have to do things that will convince the Muslim world that we aren't the evil great Satan – we are not the forked tongued, hedonistic, oil sucking, neo-colonial vampires that they would make us out to be.

I believe there are some things that we can do that will have a measurable impact, regardless of rhetoric and media blitz.

By way of an illustration, let me relate an event that occurred when I was a UN Military Observer (UNMO) serving in the Sinai. I was on patrol with another UNMO in the Sinai and was driving through a remote wadi near Mt. Saint Catherine when I turned a corner and came upon a concrete and cinder block building amid a stand of scrawny acacia trees. An elderly Egyptian man came running out waving (most of the Bedouin and other village residents recognized the white UN vehicle and the UN flag and welcomed us). We stopped and the Egyptian asked us to share tea with him. The old man, in broken, but understandable English, informed us that he was the headmaster of a

small school and the building we were sitting in was his school. The school was almost entirely bare, one or two chairs in varying conditions, no black board, and no desks. There were Bedouin woven mats on the floor and the old man pointed for us to sit on mats. We sat and were offered tea. About 15 excited young children crowded around us and stared. One young girl's gaze was transfixed on the pen protruding from my pocket. I took it out and gave it to her. She beamed as if it were the finest thing anyone had ever given her.

In talking with the headmaster, I discovered that the only method of doing lessons was in the sand, and on windy days these lessons were difficult. The schoolmaster did not have paper, or tablets, pencils or a chalkboard – no school supplies whatsoever.

The next time I was on patrol in the same wadi, I took with me a large box of tablets, pencils, erasers, and other school supplies. Again, an American UNMO was with me on this patrol. We stopped at the school and were again asked to share tea with the kindly old schoolmaster. When we surprised him with the school supplies, the old man at first seemed in a near state of shock. He stood for the longest time staring – then I saw the tears well in his eyes and slowly roll down his cheek. The children were “over-the-moon” with joy. To this day, I will never forget the impression two American UNMOs made on those Egyptian and Bedouin children (we wore the US flag on one shoulder and the UN emblem on the other). Somewhere in a remote wadi in the Sinai there are children who will never forget an American's kindness. This is how you win hearts and minds.

Countering the Madrassas

One very tangible way of helping to win the hearts and minds, and one that relates closely with the wadi story above is helping where help is really needed – in education.

Anyone familiar with the Taliban, and their extreme and radical interpretation of Islam, knows that the Taliban received their education in the madrassas of Pakistan. The Taliban learned to hate America and the West in any one of the 7,500 madrassas that have proliferated throughout Pakistan. The madrassas have become universities of jihad, where students are drilled into hating the West and are brainwashed in a willingness to die as martyrs for Allah and Islam.

The madrassas are very popular with the poor – popular because there are few real options for educating the children of the poor. To the average poor Muslim family in Pakistan, the madrassas offer the only hope of an education for their sons. Madrassas offer free tuition, and free room and board, which is a great blessing for the poor Muslim family – for if their child is accepted they will have one less child at home and therefore one less mouth to feed.

Pakistan is not the only country that has madrassas. In one shape or form they exist in nearly every Muslim country. Not all teach the same brand of radical Islam like the ones in Pakistan. Many teach secular subjects such as math and sciences, and all instruct in the basic tenants of Islam.

Offering financial assistance to Pakistan's government to help fund schools that offer secular education is one tangible way we could help counter the extremist Islam that is being taught in Pakistani madrassas.

Muslim radical extremists have learned a valuable lesson that perhaps we could learn as well – if you provide basic services such as food, education and housing, then often you will win support – you will win the “hearts and minds.” Many of the over one million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip send their children to schools run by charities such as the Islamic Society, which has close ties to Hamas, the radical Islamic Resistance Movement. “Across the Gaza Strip and West Bank, the society and other organizations like it run hundreds of

kindergartens, orphanages, sports clubs and libraries in cities, villages and refugee camps...before any Hamas activist picked up a gun, its affiliated social service groups were building popular support, mixing charity, Islamic consciousness and politics.”⁷

Ann Zwicker Kerr, a professor who once taught at the American University of Beirut with her husband Malcolm (who was killed there by terrorists of the Islamic Jihad), wrote an article in the *Washington Post* that advocates spending money and spreading education in the Middle East. She states: “...education is perhaps our greatest export, just as the students who flock to this country each year are among our most valuable imports.” Professor Kerr goes on and advocates giving out more student visas, not less. She feels that America’s “...democratic ideals, our liberty and tolerance, our optimism and, above all our commitment to education for all...” is one of the finest things America has to offer and the reason hundreds of thousands want to come to the United States.⁸ I believe the professor is right. Instead of restricting education visas, we should grant more. Stricter controls and screening should be done to be sure – and this would require an additional effort, but I believe that the extra effort would be well worth the cost.

In a recent conference on Islam held at the University of Maryland, Professor Robert W. Hefner of Boston University, stated: “education remains an area where Western aid could exercise a positive and enduring influence.”⁹ Business education, media education, and legal education are specific areas that should be covered. Professor Hefner stressed that there are some things we cannot change,

⁷ Anthony Shadid, “Islamic Activists Also Provide Helping Hands,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 15 January 1997, p. 8.

⁸ Ann Zwicker Kerr, “An Education for Them, a Bargain for Us,” *The Washington Post*, 20 January 2002, p. B3.

⁹ Robert W. Hefner, “A Clash of Civilizations or Convergence of Horizons? Cultural Conflicts in Contemporary Islamic Politics,” Brief presented at: Conference on *The Dynamics of Islamic Politics*, Center for International and Security Studies, University of Maryland, 22 February 2002.

for instance the Qur'an. Attacking Islam and the Qur'an will have no effect and only serve to anger the general Muslim population. But if, through education, we concentrate on commonalities, on the universal concepts of right and wrong, on the things we share in common with Islam, we can begin to have an impact. Education of common interests, not accomplished with a pro-American slant, but with emphasis on common human values is the way we can influence. It is through education, not through any rhetoric spread via radio, TV or the press, that we can really shape and inspire the Muslim world.¹⁰

The Peace Corps and a "Wild Idea"

The Peace Corps offers an excellent vehicle to take tangible, actionable measures that will help win hearts and minds. Not only education, but also medical aid and similar services are a godsend to the poor and downtrodden in the Middle East. The French group, Doctors Without Borders, or *Médecins Sans Frontières*, has established a wonderful reputation throughout the world. Countless worried mothers and fathers have watched as these doctors healed their sick child. The gift of healing and providing much needed medical care is one of the greatest gifts that the West can give to the poor masses in the Middle East. There is no better way to win trust and respect than to heal that poor sick Muslim child. The Peace Corps is one way to take on this effort.

But the Peace Corps as it exists today does not have the funding or manning to accomplish this enormous task. This is where my "wild idea" comes in. If we were to use military members in a "Peace Corps" like roll, we could have the numbers necessary to make an impact. Military members, especially medical professionals, could be assigned for short tours (one-year short tours or temporary duty tours of 90 or more days), to work with the Peace Corps. In this

¹⁰ Author's notes taken from Professor Hefner's brief, *ibid.*

way we could leverage the expertise of the military in a peaceful mode. It would serve as a two-way street as well. Not only would Muslim countries benefit from the U.S. military's help, but our service members would learn a great deal about Muslims and their countries as well. Perhaps I am too naïve and incapable of understanding the enormity of my suggestion – the policies and mechanics of my “wild idea” may just be too much to accomplish, but “nothing ventured, nothing gained.”

The Foreign Policy Conundrum

American Foreign Policy faces difficult times. In some ways our Foreign Policy resembles entering the Labyrinth in ancient Crete where one wrong turn in the intricate maze of national interest issues will lead us to the Minotaur. There are some experts who believe we are already about to meet the Minotaur. As one scholar notes:

“When the United States support for dictatorships is combined with the widely unpopular sanctions against Iraq and the collapse of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians, United States policy in the region is viewed as hostile to Muslims and insensitive to their plight...The collapse of the Oslo process poses a major challenge to the credibility of United States diplomacy, and unless the headlong rush to disaster is reversed, further alienation between the United States and the Muslim world is possible. This may be a far more urgent priority to address than settling accounts with America's *bête noire*, Saddam Hussein.”¹¹

There are definitely intricate and delicate national concerns that we must carefully consider as we negotiate the labyrinth of Middle East issues.

¹¹ Augustus Richard Norton, “America's Approach to the Middle East: Legacies, Questions, and Possibilities,” *Current History*, Vol. 101, No. 651, January 2002, pp. 5-7.

The “Catch 22” of Iraq

The puzzle of what to do about Iraq is one of those “damned if you do, damned if you don’t,” “Catch 22” type of problems. If we allow Saddam Hussein to stay in power and develop his weapons of mass destruction, we not only possibly endanger our own national interests but those of Western civilization as well. But if we attack Iraq, we may deepen and intensify an already perceived clash of civilizations. And what if we do manage to kill off Saddam? Who will take his place? His equally evil sons, the military, or someone from the Ba’ath Party? Obviously there are no easy answers.

When I was stationed in the United Nations Liaison Office in Amman, Jordan, in 1994, I was approached one day as I walked out of the office by a group of Arabs. It turned out that the Arabs were Iraqi refugees who were looking for U.N. offices that could help them. There were about five or six different U.N. offices in that area of Amman so I pointed the Iraqis to the offices of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The Iraqis saw the U.S. flag on my shoulder and one of them came up to me and said: “You Americans do not understand. You try and hurt Saddam but only punish the Iraqi people. We in Iraq know history. If not Saddam, then someone like him will take his place – and while you think you punish Saddam or his alternate, you only hurt the Iraqi people.” Unfortunately, there is a measure of truth in what the Iraqi refugee said.

When examining the Iraqi problem, Saddam Hussein is not the primary issue with the Arab Middle East; it is the suffering of the Iraqi people. Saddam Hussein has little support from Arab regimes or the Arab population at large – he is seen for what he is, an evil dictator – but the perception among Arabs is, that if the West goes after Saddam, it will only cause the Iraqi people more pain and suffering.

A surgical strike, one where we cut-off the head of the snake, so to speak, would be more acceptable to the Muslim world than a long drawn out campaign. Arabs respect power. Witness the diminished clamor of the Arab world after our rapid success against the Taliban and Al Qa'ida in Afghanistan. But as I said above, who would take Saddam's place? That is the tougher riddle. To really establish a democratic government in Iraq will probably take an invasion and an occupation (like WWII Germany). Although the Arab world respects power, it may not have the patience to sit and watch the United States occupy a Muslim country. There is a way, however, to resolve this enigma. We must first solve a different part of the Middle East equation.

The Israeli-Palestinian Question

The Iraqi enigma is a tough one, no doubt, but one where the kettle is simmering and not yet boiling over. The Israeli-Palestinian pot is bubbling and spilling over the sides. Tom Friedman, in a recent Op-Ed piece, talks about the real choices that face us. He writes: "...our choices are becoming clear: either we have civil wars within the communities – with Israel uprooting most of the Jewish settlements, the Palestinians uprooting Hamas and the Arab regimes dealing with their fundamentalists – or we could end up in a war of civilizations, between communities, with America also being pulled in."¹² Many Middle East experts and others in academia all say that the number one issue with the Arab and Muslim world is the Palestinian Problem.¹³

The best way to solve the tough Middle East equation is to work on the Israeli-Palestinian half. Having a solution to that side of the equation makes it easier to solve the final half – Iraq. The Arab and Muslim world will be much

¹² Thomas L. Friedman, "A Foul Wind," *The New York Times*, 10 March 2002.

¹³ See, e.g., Augustus Richard Norton, *Op. Cit.*, p. 6.

more willing to accept our actions in Iraq if we first remedy their number one problem.

For many in the Muslim world, the U.S. is linked closely with Israel. They see U.S. made fighter jets and helicopters firing on and killing Palestinians. They watch TV as the U.S. condemns Palestinian terrorism, then watch and wait to see if there will be an equal condemnation of the killings and reprisals conducted by the Israelis. Reading the news in the Arab and Muslim world you will find the press saying that the Palestinians are still waiting.

The Arab world is appealing for a more balanced U.S. approach to the Middle East peace. The *Christian Science Monitor* in talking about the conditions for the success of US envoy Anthony Zinni's ceasefire efforts this week (11-15 March 2002) states: "...success will hinge on whether he can push the Israelis – and not just the Palestinians – toward a compromise. 'During this mission, to salvage the situation, he needs to talk turkey with both sides' observes a US official who spoke on condition of anonymity."¹⁴

The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian problem is perhaps the toughest Foreign Policy issue that the United States has ever faced. How we deal with the issue can have a domino impact on other Middle East issues, and the domino effect can be good – leading to a lasting solution to difficult problems and peace – or bad, leading to an expanding crisis and the inevitable clash of civilizations.

We must not fool ourselves and think that if the Arab-Israeli problem is solved we will resolve all the problems related to Arab-Muslim hatred of the West. The West will still need to address many issues that feed Muslim animosities. But putting out the raging wildfire that is the Israeli-Palestinian problem will go a very long way towards stemming the flood of Arab rage.

I have been a leader in the USAF for over 22 years, and have realized that the Air Force's most valuable resource are its people – not fighter jets, missiles or high tech gadgetry. In the United States it is our people who are our greatest resource, not our markets or technology. And if you take this thinking one step further – it is the World's people that are the World's greatest resource. Thinking like this makes Muslims a valuable resource, and if we treat Muslims as a resource we have a better appreciation for them as human beings, and in reality, we will begin to treat them better.

¹⁴ Cameron W. Barr, "US bears down on Mideast," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 11 March 2002.